W. J. Z. BROADCAST A STORY WHICH APPEARS IN THIS ISSUE

15¢

DETECTIVE STORIES

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

NO. 168

NOV. 15, 1924

Feature Detective Story

"The HOODWINKERS"

by GEORGE BRONSON HOWARD

Mystery Magazine

Vol. VII NOVEMBER 15, 1924 No. 168

ISSUED TWICE A MONTH

Contents

FEATURE NOVELETTE

The Hoodwinkers 3
By George Bronson-Howard

TWO-PART SERIAL

The Forbidden Room (Part One) 54
By Edward Lee Bennett

SPECIAL ARTICLE

What Handwriting Reveals 60
By Louise Rice

SHORT STORIES

Drawn Teeth (Broadcast by WJZ) 26
By Joe Burke

The Clue in the Watch 29
By Carl Garret Hodges

Mixed Trails 33
By Freeman Harrison

Button! Button! 39
By Paul Ellsworth Triem

Reunion 47
By Laurence R. D'Orsey

The Hypnotic Mystery 50
By Earl W. Scott

Boy Bandit Sent to Atlanta 25

Woman, 95, Is Sentenced 28

Defrauded Banks 38

Thieves Rip Four Safes 46

Deserters Flee Governor's Island 59

Copyright, 1924, by Harry E. Wolff, Publisher, Inc., 166 West 23d St., New York. All rights reserved.
Entered as Second-Class Matter November 5, 1917, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Published by Harry E. Wolff, Publisher, Inc., 166 West 23d St., New York
Harry E. Wolff, President; L. F. Wilzin, Treasurer; Charles E. Nylander, Secretary

LU. SENARENS. Editor.

Notice.—No letters will be answered or manuscripts returned unless accompanied by sufficient postage. The publishers disclaim responsibility for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts. Authors to save time will please name price desired for submitted material.

Subscription Price.—Domestic, Single Copy, 15 Cents; Domestic, Yearly, $3.50; Canada, $3.75; Foreign, $4.00.

All remittances should be sent by express money order, P. O. order, check, registered letter, or draft to insure safety. We will not be responsible for money sent otherwise.

The Warning of the Desert

by William Lawrence

THIS is the story of Bill Andrews—plain Bill Andrews. He was twenty-seven years old—married—the father of as fine a baby boy as you have ever seen.

But Bill was just like thousands of other men. He had been forced to leave school and go to work when he was still young.

He had taken the first thing that came along and he had worked as hard as he knew how. But somehow or other, he didn't seem to be getting anywhere.

It was hard—terribly hard, sometimes—to make both ends meet. Sickness came—doctor's bills—the rent was raised—and all that sort of thing.

Above everything else in the world, Bill wanted to go home some night and tell his wife of a raise in salary—of a promotion that would mean a happier, better home.

I wonder if there is a man anywhere who hasn't had that same ambition, that same hope!

But that increase in salary and that promotion never came. Indeed, once or twice Bill came mighty near losing his job.

And then, one night, Bill came across an advertisement that told how men just like himself had gotten out of the rut and had gone ahead—how men with no more education than himself had studied at home in their spare time—how the International Correspondence Schools would come to him and help him to develop his natural ability.

Bill had seen that advertisement and that familiar coupon many, many times before. For two years he had been promising himself that he would cut it out and send it to Scranton. He knew that he ought to do it—that he should at least find out what the I. C. S. could do for him. But he never had.

And he might not have sent in the coupon this time, either, but for the few words under a picture called "The Warning of the Desert":

> **"On the Plains of Hesitation bleach the bones of countless millions who, at the Dawn of Victory, sat down to wait—and waiting, died."**

Bill read that over two or three times. "The Plains of Hesitation!" "The Dawn of Victory!" These two phrases kept ringing in his ears. They worked their way into his very soul. So he clipped that coupon, marked it and mailed it to Scranton.

Bill told me the other day that he was surprised how interested he became in his lessons—of the personal interest the teachers at the I. C. S. took in him—how his employers learned about his studying and saw evidence of it in his work.

"The most important moment in my life," says Bill, "was that moment four years ago when I sent in that I. C. S. coupon. And the happiest moment of my life was when I went home with the news of my first real increase in salary and my first real promotion. If I hadn't sent in that coupon I'd still be working at a humdrum job and a small salary."

Won't you let the I. C. S. help you, too? Won't you trade a few hours of your spare time for a good job, a good salary and the comforts that go with it? Then mark the work you like best on the coupon below and mail it to Scranton to-day. That doesn't obligate you in the least, but it will be your first big step toward success. *Do it now!*

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 5268-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject *before* which I have marked an X:

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management	☐ Salesmanship
☐ Industrial Management	☐ Advertising
☐ Personnel Organization	☐ Better Letters
☐ Traffic Management	☐ Show Card Lettering
☐ Business Law	☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Banking and Banking Law	☐ Business English
☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.)	☐ Civil Service
☐ Nicholson Cost Accounting	☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Bookkeeping	☐ Common School Subjects
☐ Private Secretary	☐ High School Subjects
☐ Spanish ☐ French	☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Electrical Engineering	☐ Architect
☐ Electric Lighting	☐ Architects' Blue Prints
☐ Mechanical Engineer	☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Mechanical Draftsman	☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Machine Shop Practice	☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Railroad Positions	☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Gas Engine Operating	☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Civil Engineer	☐ Automobile Work
☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Airplane Engines
☐ Metallurgy	☐ Navigation
☐ Steam Engineering	☐ Agriculture and Poultry
☐ Radio	☐ Mathematics

Name.....

Street Address..... 3-6-24

City..... State.....

Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.

"The Hoodwinkers"

by George Bronson Howard

CHAPTER ONE

I SAT in my box at Claybaugh's Theatre in Baltimore and for the first time in five years saw my early masterpiece staged. This was after I resigned from the detective force.

Presently I turned away from the spectacle of my socialistic hero inveighing against the bribery and corruption of the hypocritical churchman and millionaire and looked about the house in quest of something that would distract my attention. I found it readily enough; just across from me in the lower left stage-box sat Mary Cascadine! Then remembrance came to me that Mary was originally from this very town. How she came to be here tonight was no affair of mine; but she *was* here, and I had the chance of meeting her as other than a detective, for in the old days I knew she had been an associate of crooks.

Lord, what girlish innocence!

That was Mary Cascadine's keynote—innocence! I did not understand at the time how she retained it. Afterwards I discovered through my own association with her.

There was another occupant of the box—a young chap with a dissipated air, drooping eyelids and Willent clothes.

The press agent of the theatre had come into my box during the first act, and now I turned to him for information.

"Who are those people opposite?" I asked, to make sure of the girl.

He seemed surprised that I should not know Mary Cascadine, and gave me a brief résumé of her history. "She's quite well known in New York," he concluded, "and she comes of a good family on her father's side. He was a lush, and married his mother's maid. Then he deserted her and his wife brought the girl up. She knows most of the society men here in Baltimore and a lot of the women in the swifter set; but"—and he shrugged his shoulders—"she's a pretty bad lot, as you know."

"And who is that man with her?"

"Oh, that's one of Baltimore's prize plungers, Charlie Conover. Mary's helped him spend his money. His father made a lot out of real estate. Charlie got married at eighteen and was divorced at twenty."

"Do you know the Cascadine girl?" He said he did. I requested an introduction. "All right," said he, shrugging his shoulders, "but she hasn't got much use for anybody but rich men. I don't know how she happened to come here tonight. This isn't enough of a show-place to suit her. She

likes to go where the millionaires can see her."

He waited until he caught her eye, and she returned his smile with a charming little bow. "I'll go over and talk to her now," he told me, "and when I beckon you come across if you like."

When he had made himself at home in the box to the displeasure of Mr. Charles Conover, he talked to Miss Cascadine a while before beckoning to me. The intrusion of a second visitor sent Conover into a sulky fit in the far corner of the box, while I bowed over Miss Cascadine's hand.

"So you are the author of the play?" she said with sweet graciousness. "Now, do you know I am very much honored in having you come over. It is I who should have gone to you, not you to me. And now I can't, I really can't, talk to you while this act is on. I am so interested. Please stay in this box. There is lots of room. I should dearly love to talk to you during the intermission."

It was rather a warm night for the theatre, but the hint of pinkish white under the lace seemed delightfully cool and firm. As she moved her little head with its mass of waved brown hair nearer me for a momentary inspection of a hitherto minor character I sensed a delicate perfume, not of an exotic hot-house growth, but reminiscent of the fragrance of an Old World rose garden.

And yet I knew this woman for a perjurer, blackmailer, friend of thieves! I also knew her to be a talented actress.

"Do you knew," said Mary Cascadine suddenly, when the curtain fell, "I believe you could write a play for *me* if you would, just the kind of play I've always wanted. But I'm afraid I'm not a very good actress, Mr. Sighfur."

"Well," said I, struck very seriously with the idea, "I believe I could. I haven't written a play for several years, but I have half a mind to take you up, Miss Cascadine."

"But," she sighed, "I haven't ever been anything but a show-girl and a musical-comedy performer."

"Nevertheless," said I, "I believe you would make good. Look," said I, struck with a sudden desire to give her some inkling of my knowledge of her real character, "how about a play which had to do with a dual nature in a woman? Some sort of a hereditary taint which made a really good woman bad for half of her time. Have one act in Baltimore here for her respectable life—the other in some out-of-the-way part of New York—like Beeckman Place, for instance." I referred to one of my most private residences.

"Beeckman Place," she bubbled, "that sounds so Knickerbockerish, doesn't it? Oh, I'm quite charmed with it, Mr. Sighfur. You must come and see me and talk to me about it. You live in New York, don't you? Well, so do I. When you go back you must come and see me."

"Why not here?" I asked. "Suppose we take dinner tomorrow night at the Country Club? I'll call for you about sundown. They have quite a charming place, and a friend gave me a card to-day."

She agreed and turned to Conover: "Charlie, will you please have the club people send me a card first thing tomorrow?"

Conover had no chance to say anything but "yes." He glared at me again by way of evening matters, however, and I rose and bowed over Mary Cascadine's hand again.

"I'm at the Rafford," she said. "Shall I expect you then at six tomorrow?"

"I hardly dare hope for expectation before that," I replied.

"Indeed, I shall begin expecting at four, then," she laughed. "For I am quite charmed with your play, Mr. Sighfur. So is Mr. Conover; aren't you, Charlie?"

Charlie tried to make his affirmative sound like a negation, and again glared. If he had known that at a little later date I was to have the honor of preventing the law's substitution of a hempen halter for his tie he might not have so failed of civility.

For that was the position in which a mere passing of twenty-four hours placed us. And I had come down to Baltimore to forget about evidence making in the detective business.

CHAPTER TWO

MARY and I dined on the upper porch of the Country Club with moonlight and starlight and a silver candelabrum, two branched and crimson-shaded, on the white cloth. The club-boy had removed the dinner things before I tossed my cigarette away, and Mary rested her arms on the table and looked across at me.

"What about Beeckman Place, Mr. Sighfur?" she asked. "I now recall unpleasantly having been in that street."

"Zetter brought you there to see me. I was a detective posing as Herr Schmalz on a robbery case."

I do not think she had expected this.

"At the time alluded to I wrote you that I had been called to Baltimore on some business. The business was to remember what I was before I took to being a rascal. My own career was none too good."

I spoke bitterly. My poor old play of the night before had awakened sentiments and ambitions that would not down.

Mary Cascadine was crying.

"Very effective," I sneered, "on a man who doesn't know you. But *I* do, Miss Cascadine. I knew your record before I took the Moray case, when I was a detective. I thought it so bad then that I—even I—didn't want to handle it. I admire you. As an actress you are superb. As one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen you appeal to my artistic sense. As a criminal, to my admiration for that sort of perverted genius. As——"

She held up her hand for a moment with —yes, hang it!—with a certain sweet dignity.

"Please don't!" she begged. "I realize what I must be in your eyes. But remember that I—I have reformed and am trying to live down the past."

"Rot! Pure drivel!" I cut in skeptically.

She looked away with a weary little shrug and let her hands support her head; her eyes were weary, too.

"You don't understand," she said very simply.

"No," I pursued, wholly enraged; "I don't understand your viewpoint because I can't deceive myself into believing that any one but myself is responsible for my own corrupt moral state. You are evidently blaming it on some one else; but I won't let it affect me. I'm not forgetting how you threatened me as 'Herr Schmalz' unless he took up the Morey case; nor your attitude and language when you spoke to that woman in the car the night when you helped the desperado Daniel Ijams to escape."

"I have denied nothing; I have asked for no sympathy or condonation, have I?" Her eyes seemed hopeless.

"Your attitude has," I returned sulkily. "And that Fox-'Book-of-Martyrs' expression on your face! You've got nothing to regret. You played a hard game against me in that case, and you won. But you——"

"I am to be denied the right to be disgusted with myself—is that it? I did not think that self-approval was necessary, even in a criminal. I cannot explain to you this change in me; to you least of all men, for I would be accused then of 'playing another game.' You have called me a splendid actress; consequently to you I can be neither sincere nor repentant. It is all acting to you. It is not acting, but you do not believe that. If you were any other man in the whole world I could explain; but I cannot to you."

She arose. "Take me back to the hotel, please," she said.

I do not think we exchanged ten words on our return journey to the Rafford. I helped her out and walked with her to the lift; then raising my hat bade her goodnight, and passed back to the bar for a drink.

I had only just put down my glass when a page-boy shouted out my name from the door. On my raising my hand, he gave me an envelope. Opening it, two slips fell out. Both were hasty scrawls of a few lines, the first in Mary Cascadine's handwriting, the second in one unfamiliar to me, and reading:

"MARY: For God's sake get me one of those New York lawyers, or I'm done for. They've arrested me for murdering my cousin, Jim Conover. I didn't do it, Mary; be-

fore God I didn't; but things look black for me. Wire for a lawyer, quick, and come and see me. I'm in jail. CHARLIE."

Mary Cascadine had added on the other slip:

"Please, please, come up and help me. The boy will bring you."

I turned. The page still waited. When I had nodded, he led me to the lift and the third floor, where he showed me into the reception-room of Mary Cascadine's suite.

CHAPTER THREE.

"YOU will take the case?" she asked.

"I don't know what the case is," I replied, "I never act directly in these cases, at all events. You must wire for my man Zetter; and expenses must be guaranteed, and half the fee paid over if we decide to take it."

"If Mr. Conover has not the money I will pay it myself," she said.

I tried to get some breath after this astonishing statement. She would pay for the privilege of releasing a bankrupt man. Then I smiled.

"I see," I said, like the mean little cad I was.

"You don't see at all," she returned in tones devoid of expression, "because I am not, as you imagine, in love with Charles Conover. Nor do I expect to gain anything by securing him his freedom. His money is nearly all gone. If I told you that it was conscience that was actuating me in this matter you wouldn't believe me. If I said that the fact that I had aided Charles Conover in his riotous expenditures made me feel somewhat responsible for any crime he might commit through lack of funds, you would repeat the accusation of acting. So we'll let that drop."

"But," said I, "you wish to free him, whether he is guilty or not?"

"Yes," she replied, "because if he is freed he may turn out to be a decent sort of man. He has not had half a chance up to now, thanks to such people as myself. If he committed this crime he did it in a half-drunken state urged on by the desire to free himself from his entanglements. I will not believe it a premeditated murder."

"Do you know anything of the circumstances of the murder?" I asked.

She shook her head.

"Well, then," I said, "there is no use in discussing the question at the present time. As you know, I cannot afford to move actively in the matter. Neither can you, for I may need your assistance in this case. I should advise you to go immediately to New York—not to answer this note, which Conover has sent you; let him imagine you have done what he probably expects you will do, which is to say, dropped him entirely. He will rave and fume and probably call you beastly names. The turnkeys and prisoners will hear them and communicate them to the detectives. Thus your value to us will be increased because of the lack of apparent complicity. I shall wire Zetter tonight in code, tell him to come down here and look thoroughly into the case and bring Leonard and O'Mahony. But I shall not be here. He will take the midnight train from New York to Baltimore. I will take the midnight train from Baltimore to New York. If I return to Baltimore (as I probably shall have to do) it will be as an entirely different-looking man. Now, these things seem trifling, but they are important. Zetter will thoroughly look into the ins and outs of the case, come to New York and report to us at Beeckman Place. Now there is a train leaving Union Station for New York at 11.20, one leaving Mount Royal at 11.35. I should advise you to take one of them. I shall take the 12.50 from Union. It won't do for you to take the same train that I take. Any suspicion that you and I are at all interested in one another or in the Conover case must be avoided."

The words "interested in one another" brought flaming scarlet into her cheeks, but she said nothing.

I looked at her. She met my gaze. Her eyes were only sad.

"Mary," I added, calling her for the first time by that name, "I don't understand you; can't pretend to. But if you are playing an

unselfish part I am willing to play one, too. Zetter will have to have his share; the expenses must be paid; but I won't take a penny out of this Conover business for myself."

She drew a long breath and every curve of her form stood out; her eyes warmed me into a flame, a madness. Then with a sudden leap backward I cursed her.

"Damn you," I said, "none of that! I'll stand by what I said, but no vamping!"

As she stood cold and erect facing me my rage increased; but then she dropped into a chair and sat staring straight before her, tears, which she made no effort to disguise, dropping unheeded.

"I deserve it," she said, as though thinking aloud and very much lost and groping blindly. "I deserve it! I deserve it! I deserve it!"

I stumbled out of the place, hating myself with a fiercer hatred than the one I had had for her. The fact was I had fallen in love with her.

I had no need to wait for Zetter's inquiries before ascertaining something of the true nature of the Conover case. The next morning when the sleeping-car porter had aroused me from my slumber in upper 4, and I had made a very scant toilet in the wash-compartment of the train, the first words to make any impression on my ears after the station porter's "Carry your bag, sir," came from a newsboy at the exit shouting the details of the "Society murder." He handled only the more sensational papers; but I procured the others from the newsstand, and on my way across to Twenty-third street on the ferry-boat I read the particulars.

When I had read them the difficulties looked unsurmountable. If ever I would have believed a man guilty on the evidence Charles Conover was the gentleman in question.

James Stricker Conover, the cousin and dead man, had, first of all, made a will several years before leaving everything he possessed to his favorite relative. That was the point most insisted upon by the newspapers. The data relevant to the matter was as follows:

Black Beeches, the Conover country house in the Green Spring Valley, was used only when James Conover happened to be in that vicinity, which was not often. James Conover was a monomaniac on two subjects, safes and jewels, and he divided his time between collecting gems in all countries of the earth and perfecting safe combinations to protect his treasures when at home. James Conover had been the subject of many "special" stories in the Sunday sheets, one in particular having probably been read by every man, woman and child in the United States: an adventure on the Lower Russian Steppes coming through a search for a supposed-to-be mythical "Brown Bear Diamond," which had been mined in the Urals, stolen by a convict, and not found on his body when he was recaptured in his native province. Conover had gone to trace this rare brown diamond, and had only succeeded in mixing himself up with the Turkish Government.

That was a year or so ago, during which time the whereabouts of James Stricker Conover had been within his own knowledge.

And now he was dead in his own house.

Some time before the diamond incident a newspaper story had given him prominence. He had announced that he had invented a safe which no burglar could open, which no explosives could touch, and which it would be a very hard matter even to find. "In my house," he was quoted as boasting vaingloriously, "are more jewels than any one person in the United States has. The value approximates a million. I leave them there unprotected by anybody except two negroes, and yet there's not a thief in the country can get them."

Afterwards he denied that he had said this for publication, but tacitly vouched for the statements that had been made.

A number of professional second-story men and a few amateur cracksmen took him at his word. Two of these his negroes caught, one affair resulting in a month's stay in the hospital for the younger darky, due to a blow in the stomach from a burglar's jimmy which resulted in a tumor and an operation.

On the night of the murder, which was, as you know, the night before, the younger negro had gone across the valley to the electric cars, one of which he had taken for Emory Grove. The father, Ezra, admits to a bad headache, a sleeping draught and unconsciousness of any happening until he was abruptly wakened by a noise; he remembers sitting up listening and hearing two more noises of like variety—viz., screams. He telephoned quickly to the sheriff at Stevenson, a village half a mile away, and asked for assistance, then took his shot-gun and ran through the house, switching on the electric lights in halls and rooms. All were empty except one—his master's study. To that he found the door locked. Now as no doors were ever locked in the Conover house and as neither he nor his son had turned the key, he naturally supposed this to be the room from which the scream had come. From all accounts he must have been a fearless negro, for he put his shot-gun to the door and blew off the lock. Then he kicked open the door and stood with leveled shotgun and saw something like this:

James Conover on his back on the floor, a knife in his side; an overturned table, a desk split open, and a man with one leg over the window-sill. Ezra called on him to stop or he would shoot, but the man hastily disappeared. The negro ran to the window, and in the light from the house saw the man pick himself up and begin to run hastily toward the meadows. Ezra fired at his legs and the man fell; then Ezra ran downstairs and out of the house. The white man had meanwhile picked himself up and was trying to hobble away. The shotgun was only double-barreled and Ezra had forgotten to load after his two shots, so that he was forced to grapple with the man. The negro's powerful muscles won, and he soon had his antagonist on his back. Then the man underneath called him by name and begged him to let him go, and Ezra recognized Charles Conover. Charles swore incoherently that he had nothing to do with the murder; that he had entered the room, found it dark, heard a rustling noise, was suddenly pushed out of the way, and the door locked on him. It was he who had screamed, he declared, when he switched on the lights and saw the dead body of his cousin, for the moment so stupefied he could not move; but when Ezra blew open the door he had realized that circumstances were against him and that he had better make off. Ezra, however, maddened with grief at the loss of his master, paid no heed to his story and kept Charles a prisoner until the sheriff came and arrested him.

I sighed wearily. This was the hardest case of all, and I saw no light ahead. Everything was against Conover—he had a bad name and a reason for the crime.

CHAPTER FOUR

IN New York, as I turned a corner, I stumbled plump against a young woman who staggered against the doorway of a saloon. There came a wail and I realized that the girl was carrying a child in her arm. I begged her pardon several times, indeed was quite abject over my carelessness.

"It doesn't matter, zur," replied the girl, in a rich throaty sort of voice and with an accent which I knew to be English, but failed to identity as to place—she was not a Londoner, that was plain. "It's a-making bother for its milk, poor little twoad. You have not hurt it."

Now I noted that the girl was evidently very pretty and very tired-looking—not more than nineteen I should have said. And as I looked I fancied I saw a resemblance to some one I knew; and so fancying, it was not long before I had Mary Cascadine's face dancing before me. Perhaps the tired look about the eyes helped the verisimilitude, for my last sight of Miss Cascadine's face had been through a blur of her tears.

"You'd better take the child in out of the wet," I said. "It'll catch cold." For fine rain had begun to sift through the fog.

"Zur," she said, and her tone was magic, "I have got no home to take her to."

And as she stood in the doorway of the saloon she told me something of her plight.

She had ten pounds when landing from the White Star boat from Liverpool; a supposed agent had come to her and offered to place her immediately in a lucrative position as a nurse on payment of five pounds. He had been well-dressed and courteous; she had not distrusted him—and that accounted for the way he robbed her. Since the night before she had been tramping the streets.

"See here," said I, moved to pity, "you come along with me. I've got an English servant and his wife and they'll lodge you until you get something to do. Come along. That baby will die if you keep it in this damp air much longer."

She protested, and was for the moment, I think, a little suspicious of me, deeming me perhaps somewhat too kind for mere philanthropy; but I generally have my way when I so determine, and the girl went with me to Beeckman Place, only a little distance from where I had met her.

Topliss and his wife were surprised by the presence of my companions. I gave over mother and child to Mrs. Topliss with instructions that the baby be treated to warm milk, and both child and mother to a change of clothes.

As I had nothing to do until the morning edition of the afternoon papers should be on the street I came down to the kitchen later and found the girl in one of Mrs. Topliss's wrappers crooning to the sleeping child in her arms. I sat down and lighted a cigarette. I asked her her name.

"Mrs. Frederick Errol," she replied without hesitancy.

"And your husband?"

It was rather a pitiful story. She had come to America to find him. He had been motoring through England about a year before, had seen her, taken a fancy to her and proposed an elopement. He was what she still considered much her superior in rank—a gentleman—handsome withal (so *she* said), owning a beautiful auto, finely dressed—the prince of the fairy story. When they reached London he hired lodgings for her and married her. They lived together some eight months very privately in a cottage in Upper Norwood. One day he went out and that was the last she had seen of him. With her remaining money she bought a ticket second-class to New York—and the rest of the story you know.

She had a photograph of "Errol," and minutely described his habits and temperament. I judged him to be the youthful son of some wealthy American, who had been sent to Oxford or Cambridge to learn the more civilized forms of vice.

Evidently "Frederick Errol" had taken his marriage bonds very lightly and had intended to be free of them whenever he grew tired of the girl. He had most certainly managed to protect himself.

The curious thing about the whole mix-up was that the girl still appeared to love the young scoundrel.

"Have you got the photograph with you?" I asked.

She remembered with a sudden flush that, along with other of the personal effects, the photographs were at the house of a philanthropic lady who had taken her in.

"We must find her," I said. "What was the number of the house, name of the street and the name of the woman?"

She could only furnish the latter. "Mrs. Walters," she had called herself. She remembered that from the back windows could be seen the glass roofs of a low building, from which came occasional strains of music, and had been referred to as the "Good Old Straw." This clearly identified a certain dance-hall near Sixth avenue and Thirtieth street, facing the old "Alexandrine."

"I'll get your things for you some time today or tomorrow," I assured her; and then I forgot about her for the moment, for Topliss having returned at that juncture with the papers, I took these to my room to sift out any further evidence against Mr. Charles Conover.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE new press matter was much the same as the earlier stuff; but some new evidence was introduced by the fact that

James Stricker Conover was supposed to have been seen at a little road-house some forty miles up-country from the Conover house, where the local mechanic had fixed up the machinery of a motor. It was dark at the time, some two hours or less before the murder; but it chanced that the man summoned happened to be a Baltimore mechanic on a visit to his relatives, who had been at one time one of a gang making repairs on Conover's yacht. He had spoken to Conover, but got no recognition of his services of three years past, saying that Conover stared at him with fishy eyes and did not seem to understand. The mechanic imagined him to be drunk, and said that although Conover appeared to be the sole occupant of the machine, there was a great bundle of something in the body of the car covered over with oilcloth, and once or twice he fancied this bundle moved. He also said that Conover cast frequent and anxious glances toward it, but acknowledged, as the repairs were made in the dark of the roadway with only one small oil-light to help him, that he could not be sure about either the moving of the bundle or the anxious glances, simply giving the impressions he had received at the time.

Then a pair of country sweethearts out buggy-riding under the moon about half an hour previous to the killing had a story to tell of a big gray machine that had halted just below Elm avenue, a road running parallel to the southern outlook of Black Beeches. The man said that he turned out of Elm avenue abruptly; that there the road had been oiled and the wheels of his vehicle made no noise; that as he came into a patch of moonlight around the curve he had a fancy that two men were standing by the big gray car; but at the first sound of wheels one jumped out of the road and into the machine, so that when the buggy passed the moonlight bathed but one man, and that man he could not identify because of his motor-coat, goggles and cap. Yes, he knew Mr. James Stricker Conover; had served him with butter and eggs, and the man in the road might have been him, as he was about the same height.

After this story the police set detectives and country constabulary to hunt for a big gray motor, but faced chaos. Many motors had passed up and down from the different houses in the valley, from the Kennels, and on the way to and from Baltimore, and motors running swiftly in darkness and insufficient moonlight were much the same to country folk.

One fact was patent: that if there were another man in the auto that man was not Charles Conover.

The motor-car and the supposed second person gave me something to work on. It was for me to prove that the person who supposedly accompanied James Stricker Conover from over—again supposititiously—Mason and Dixon's line was the real assassin.

But who that person might be and why he had so assassinated J. S. Conover was a matter that did not readily admit of proof.

Besides, they argued, if there were such a man in the motor with J. S. Conover and he did intend to kill him, why had he not done so on the road; and if he had brought Conover to his own house to kill him the inference was naturally robbery, which is to say Conover had been disposed of after his usefulness had ceased, and as there had been no robbery, that aspect of the case seemed a *cul-de-sac* theory.

Not one word had been said in the papers regarding Conover's secret safe with its vaulted combination. Clever burglars had made attempts to locate the hiding-place, but had not succeeded. Might not some man have brought Conover to the house to reveal the location of the safe, and when he had confiscated the contents for himself made away with Conover for safety's sake, and upon the entrance of Charles Conover switched off the light and locked the door behind the new arrival in order to cast the shadow of suspicion upon him?

Yes, that was all very well. But to prove that—how?

Just the same, I determined to look into the matter of that safe. Naturally, if my theory had any correctness in it a clever criminal would close the safe after rifling it, just as he would leave articles of trifling value about to make it appear that the crime

had no financial reason for its perpetration. I summed up the entire case, as far as I had read it, in a few queries which I wrote on a pad, and which I intended to show Zetter.

Query 1. Where has James Stricker Conover been during the past year?

Query 2. Where is the famous safe?

Query 3. Is the safe rifled?

And as I lay and meditated over just what particular variety of wrong might result in murder, I remembered the case of the little Dartmoor girl down below.

In that moment I was off the divan and on my feet, pacing up and down the room.

Suppose James Conover's whereabouts for the past year could not be determined? If Conover's whereabouts could not be proven, then his case might very well fit that of the missing "Frederick Errol."

I went out of the basement door of the Beeckman Place house half an hour later. I wore a suit of clothes that had been made on the Rue Montmartre, a straw-colored wig and an upturned mustache. In this garb I picked up a passing taxi on Tenth avenue and was transported to the West 30th street police station, where I conversed with a desk-sergeant in very bad English indeed. I was, I told the sergeant, the friend of a badly mulcted young Parisian, but recently arrived in America. I said that I did not wish to ask the police to take the matter up, and if they could give me some information as to the number and street of a woman known as "Mrs. Lily Walters," I thought I could settle the matter satisfactorily without any assistance. The sergeant was very sulky, and said he did not know of such a person as "Mrs. Walters"; thereupon I announced my intention of returning to my lodgings, securing my credentials as a member of the Paris police on a visit to America, calling the attention of Mulberry Street to the matter. The desk-sergeant consented to consult with one of the detectives. When he again addressed me he gave me the number and offered to send a plainclothes man along with me.

I declined, thanked him, and sought the Twenty-ninth street house, where I knocked for admission.

The door opened a trifle and I inserted myself into the opening and stood in the vestibule. "Inside for you, Mom Lil," I advised, pushing the corpulent woman ahead of me. I knew she was a crook and told her what I wanted.

Within half an hour the girl's trunk and two dressing-bags had been loaded on a taxi and, with the darkness now to aid in my disguise, along with the fog, I drove directly to Beeckman Place, unloaded the luggage on the pavement, paid the chauffeur and helped Topliss to bring the things into the house.

But half an hour later I had my reward in the three pictures of "Frederick Errol." He was a young man of ordinary appearance.

I have a good memory for faces. The likeness on the printed page films itself on my brain. And it was not very long before it occurred to me that I had seen that face somewhere in the newspapers or magazines in the last few weeks. We kept a complete file of the New York, Chicago and San Francisco sheets at the Beeckman Place house, and these I set to work to examine. In one of them, under the heading of 'People in the Public Eye,' I found my man. It was a reproduction of the same protograph that I held in my hand.

"Francis Erne Welby," read the caption, "whose half-back play won the game for Cambridge in the New Haven-Cambridge game of 1924. Mr. Welby, after a year abroad to study the pottery systems of England and France, returns to be admitted to membership in his father's great corporation. His engagement to the daughter of Mr. Cluny, the discoverer of the Cluny-Welby glazed tile formula, which has lifted both men from the ranks of the well-to-do to the multi-millionaire class, has recently been announced, and the wedding is scheduled for ——." The date mentioned was just two days past. That settled Mr. Frederick Errol.

I locked the photographs away in my safe. The Dartmoor girl's story was mine to use if I wished. Then I picked up the late afternoon papers which Topliss had brought in, and read them for more infor-

mation about the Conover case. There wasn't much.

One point of new evidence, however, I did find hidden away under a mass of theories. The stiletto with which Conover had been stabbed had been in use as a paper-cutter and generally lay, according to the negro servant, Ezra, on the desk. This point was valuable, proving, as it did, that the crime was at least unpremeditated. I was glad this had been deduced for Conover's sake; but it assisted me not at all for the moment. Yet afterwards it proved to be valuable when I turned the Dartmoor girl's story to account.

When I read in the personal columns of the newspaper that Mr. and Mrs. Francis Erne Welby had arrived in town that evening and had engaged a suite of rooms at the Mall Astoria for the two days they would remain in New York before sailing for Italy, I made up my mind to arrange the Dartmoor girl's financial affairs then and there. I left the Beeckman Place house again and went to the Mall Astoria. A telephone message there was productive of the information from Mrs. Welby's maid that her master and mistress had gone to Canary's for dinner. I went farther up Fifth avenue and entered Canary's. On a blank card I wrote a message to Welby:

"A former resident of Upper Norwood who was acquainted with your friend, Mr. Frederick Errol, desires the honor of a few moments' conversation."

I lounged in one of the waiting-rooms while an attendant found one of the waiter-captains, who in turn managed to discover Mr. Welby. He soon returned with a young man.

"That is the gentleman, sir," said the attendant, pointing to me. I advanced, smiling, and put out my hand. With a side-glance at me, he took it. He was fingering my card with the other hand.

"I don't understand this," he said, but there was a false note in his voice. "I don't know any Frederick Errol, and where is Upper Norwood?"

"You're overdoing it, Welby," I said in a whisper. "I should advise you to come with me to one of Canary's private dining-rooms. A charge of"—and my voice sank lower—"bigamy is not pleasant on a honeymoon."

The monocle fell out. "Boy," he said brusquely to one of the attendants, "I want one of the private dining-rooms for a few moments. This gentleman and I want to have a private conversation."

He did not again speak until we sat facing each other across the table of the private dining-room with the candle-light turning the polished mahogany into many little flickering pools of light.

"Painful subject, I understand," I said; "but it's better to get it over, and quickly. Mrs. Frederick Errol is here destitute, looking for you. We'll keep this thing quiet for you if you cash up; otherwise we'll let her know about your marriage, and then the Dartmoor temperament can play its little game. I've got your marriage lines in my pocket and your photograph by La Sony; she's prepared to swear to you; she can get plenty more witnesses. We've got the money to fight her case for her, and we can put you in jail for bigamy and give her the wife's privileges in the husband's estate. The disclosure breaks the firm of Cluny & Welby. You lose reputation, money—everything. You're badly hipped, Mr. Welby. I can't imagine how you ever made such a fool of yourself."

"You dirty blackmailer!" he said.

"Blackmailer, eh?" I echoed slowly. "And what of you, my lad? Why"—but my sense of humor got the better of my anger—"why, you clumsy young ass! If you had a redeeming quality in your crime I might admire you. But you plunge gaily into offenses against the law, and then when you're forced to pay for your didoes, you squeal! You're really not worthy of consideration, and we'll settle this affair without any of it. I had meant to ask you for thirty thousand dollars' worth of the Cluny-Welby stock. That 'blackmailer' of yours will cost you ten thousand dollars!"

I rose. Probably conscious by this time of his helplessness, he shifted his sullen stare from me to the candelabrum.

"Tomorrow morning," I said, "you will have transferred to the credit of Jasper

Topliss, Lock Box 49, Plainfield, N. J., twenty-five shares in the Cluny-Welby company at two thousand—I believe—dollars a share. Is not that enough to make up the fifty thousand? Did you get the name and address?"

He looked up. "You have got me, haven't you?" he snarled.

"That is apparent to the most inferior intellect," I replied; "and you're getting off cheaply, in my mind."

"How do I know this will be the last time?"

"My word," I replied. He laughed unpleasantly.

"It's all you'll get," I added, shrugging my shoulders. "Don't fancy it is of the same quality as yours and then maybe the future will be more rosy."

"What's the name and address?"

I repeated it for him. He accepted my pencil and wrote it down on his cuff.

"Tomorrow afternoon at two o'clock I shall send Mr. Topliss over to furnish the necessary signatures. You will deliver the stock certificates to him. He will meet you at the downtown office of your company."

And then, without "good-night," I went out of the room and started back for Beeckman Place.

Calling Topliss, I gave him a note to Welby, explaining that he (Topliss) knew nothing of the reasons for the transfer of the stock. Topliss I instructed as to bringing the certificates to the house, and cautioned him against mentioning the transfer even to his wife. Then I put on my usual attire and went to my *bona fide* apartments in the Longacre.

CHAPTER SIX

A TELEPHONE call took me away from my after-breakfast cigarette and I answered it to find that Mary Cascadine was on the wire. Unconsciously I greeted her with a certain gladness, and her tones were responsive. I was heartily ashamed of my display of two nights previous, but she seemed willing to ignore said display, and I was glad to have no more to face than that attitude. She asked me graciously whether I had heard from Zetter, and I told her I had not.

"He must get off," she said.

I remembered the Dartmoor girl, and my idea of yesterday returned to me with a new light.

"You might manage it," I said.

"What do you mean?" she asked. "Are you indulging in sarcasm?"

"I'll work it out and let you know," I replied. "Call me up later and I'll tell you when Zetter is returning?"

I went to an obscure telegraph office on Sixth avenue and wrote a telegram to "Zinkand, Baltimore." Zetter always registered this address on his arrival in any city and sent one of the detectives around three times a day to the main office to collect my wires. My answer came within the next two hours that he would arrive at Jersey City about ten o'clock that night. My next task was to instruct Mary Cascadine to take a cab at nine-thirty that night, drive to the Grand Central depot and lose herself in the crowd of train-takers.

I waited for her outside the saloon where she was to meet me, and at the time an echo of near-by church-bells told me that the time had arrived for Zetter's train to pull in at Jersey City, a veiled, ulstered woman who might have been of middle age, and who slouched very close to me, nipped my arm. I started indignantly to protest, but the woman with one glance at the "Family Entrance" of the saloon and a significant turn of the head toward me seemed to apprise me of her identity, and she continued on her way to the river. I followed slowly, and she, after another glance, apparently to satisfy herself of my understanding, made no further efforts to assure my following. In the shadows beyond I caught up with her.

Later we entered the Beeckman Place house together, and when we were on the third floor she threw off ulster, hat and veil.

"Very fetching!" said I, in honest admiration.

It was some time before either of us

broke the silence, and when we did it was with an exclamation that was brought forth by a knock on the door.

"Zetter!" I muttered.

But it was only the rabbit-whiskered Topliss, who announced that Mr. Zetter had arrived and wished to know if he might come upstairs. The usual formal permission was given, and Zetter rumbled up the steps and deposited himself breathlessly on a chair.

"Well," said I, rather sharply, "this is not an exhibition of grampuses. Take some whisky and get down to business."

Zetter said he wanted beer. I rang for Topliss, who brought the desired beverage, then I locked the door to the steps and told Zetter to go ahead.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"I'M a little winded," he explained, "and I've been kept on the jump for the past two days. I tell you I never——"

"Come," said I. "No note of personal affliction. What about the Conover case?"

It was as I had expected, and I did not blame Zetter for it. He had learned no more than I had gained for the newspapers, and although he took nearly an hour to describe his detective work in detail, it threw no new points my way.

"No use in talking," Zetter concluded, "we can't do anything with this case. I don't believe Charlie Conover really killed him, but the evidence all points that way, and there doesn't seem to be a chance in a hundred that he'll ever leave that jail for anything but the penitentiary. He's even been fool enough to admit that he went to Black Beeches that night with the intention of robbing the safe if he could find it. Said he was broke and desperate; needed money and had to have it."

"Yes, I know," broke in Mary Cascadine. "He asked me to marry him that day and I refused. He shared your opinion of me, gentlemen, and immediately came to the conclusion that it was because he had lost his money. I told him that had nothing to do with it; but he would not believe it. He said: 'If I get money, Mary, will you have me?' I told him most decidedly no. 'You think I can't get it, don't you?' he said. 'Well, I can, and I'll bet when I come to you again and ask you, you'll have me'—and——"

She spread her hands and shrugged her rounded shoulders, and in her eyes was that world-weary look again.

"You gave him to believe, then," asked Zetter, "that if he got the money you would marry him?"

"He gave himself to believe that," answered Mary Cascadine. "I refused him twice, and was very decided in holding out no hope. But he thought, perhaps, that I believed it was impossible for him to get any more money."

The explanation came to me suddenly: "And now that he is heir to James Stricker Conover's ten million——"

"I deserve it," she said, very much as she had said on the night of the murder. And again I hated myself for a cad.

"Eh?" queried Zetter.

"I beg your pardon," said I, recovering myself. "I didn't hear what you said."

"I was asking you if you really thought there was any safe at all in the Conover house? You know you sent me a note last night with some queries in it. You asked me to find out if the safe were really rifled."

I nodded.

"Well, Charlie Conover owns Black Beeches now according to the will, and he's got the right to give leave to have the house torn up if he likes. I got his permission to examine the walls and flooring, furniture, etc., of the house. We tapped every wall in the house, and tore the floors and walls of the study to pieces, but we didn't find any safe or any trace of one. So I'm wondering if there really was any safe?"

"You really made an exhaustive search?" I asked. I could generally trust Zetter for a painstaking care in such affairs. He replied that he had, and if there were a safe it deserved its name, for no robber under the moon could ever find it.

I sighed. That killed an important—

the only important—bit of real tangible evidence that we could have utilized.

"You are really sure?"

"Well, Mahony and Leonard were with me, and you know that six hours of that kind of work isn't going to be done without finding something if there is anything to be found. We took an architect along with us, who accounted for every bit of space in the entire house, walls and all; and as for the furniture of the study, that's torn to pieces."

"And the whereabouts of James Stricker Conover for the past year?"

"I've spent nearly two hundred dollars in cable tolls," he replied, "and I know as little as you do; the diplomatic man at Paris was the last one who had clapped eyes on him. The question is, can we make anything out of it?"

I looked at Mary Cascadine. "We may," I replied; "but it's just the same as asking Miss Cascadine to put her life in reach of the law, and I doubt if she would do it."

"I told you before," she said quietly, "that I would do anything to get Charles Conover out of jail. What my motives are need not matter. I mean that when I say it. I will do anything to get him out of jail. You understand that I mean it?"

I did.

"But I"—and I succumbed into weakness—"don't want you to take the risks. I——"

She smiled.

"Ask Mrs. Errol to step upstairs," I said.

Topliss brought her up. Her resemblance to Mary Cascadine was more marked now than it had been when I found her, for her hair happened to be arranged in precisely the same way, and her dress, a plain white one, made for the air of simplicity which Mary Cascadine had assumed for the night.

"You zent for me, zur?" she asked.

I looked at Mary Cascadine. She arose, crossed the room and put her arm around the girl's waist.

"My dear," she said, and when the girl looked at her the expression was of absolute trust. "My dear, you come from England, don't you? Dartmoor, I think—isn't it? And your name is—say, Pye?"

The girl looked frightened. "No, ma'am," she replied, "I am Mrs. Frederick Errol. Leastwise, I think it's something else, but that was what my husband told me. But I comes from Dartmoor, and——"

"Your maiden name was Pye?"

"No, ma'am, Blackburn; but mother, she was a Pye—'Tilda Pye——"

"Thank you, my dear," said Mary Cascadine. "I hope I shall see you again."

The girl understood her dismissal and went out with wondering eyes after I had nodded to her, in her lack of egotism not noticing the resemblance between herself and Mary Cascadine.

"That was my cousin," said Mary, when I had locked the stair door. "Where did you find her?"

"Your cousin?" I gasped. "Why, the girl hasn't been in American but three days."

Mary nodded. "My mother was her mother's sister. And now," said Mary Cascadine, "what has my little Dartmoor cousin got to do with Charles Conover, and in what way am I concerned? I can perceive dimly that you mean to utilize the resemblance between us—but how?"

She composed herself to listen with steady eyes.

Very slowly, and dwelling on each point, I told them the story of the Dartmoor girl, finishing with my visit to Welby and the transfer of the stock. I could see from Mary Cascadine's eyes that by now she had more than a glimmering of my purpose, and that it somewhat frightened her.

"Now," said I, at length reaching the relevancy of the Dartmoor girl's case, "James Stricker Conover has been absent for a year or more——"

"Fourteen months exactly," broke in Zetter.

"Absent to the world's entire lack of knowledge of his whereabouts. This girl's husband is married again and will not dare raise a protest. Suppose J. S. Conover were her husband; ran into her again in New York; took her down to the place in a motor; threatened her life if she didn't keep her mouth shut; and suppose she picked up

the stiletto and killed him. She would be more or less justified, wouldn't she?"

"But that girl couldn't play the part," broke in Zetter.

"Quite true; but Miss Cascadine could."

Her lips were rigid; Zetter's hung pendulous.

"How can you get her to consent?" asked Mary.

"I don't intend to. I will go to her, tell her that Frederick Errol is dead; that his father has paid her over this fifty thousand dollars on condition that she does not call herself Mrs. Errol again; and that she give up the marriage license, etc. I will keep her here in the house and keep the newspapers away from her. When the trial's over I'll take her down to Florida, buy her a little place and say good-by."

"I see," said Mary; "and what am I to do?"

"Make up in country style; talk like a Dartmoor woman; steal something to eat from a baker's shop; get arrested; break down at the police station; confess to the murder of James Stricker Conover, and finally go into a state of madness, raving madness. Are you artist enough for that?"

"I think so. What then?"

"They will probably remove you to the Asylum for the Criminal Insane in Westchester County. You will escape as soon as possible. It is not necessary to remain there any longer than a day. But perhaps you will not be able to escape. Do you care to take the risk? If you can't escape from the asylum you had better return to sanity. They will clear you of murder at the trial with such a story told in your realistic and convincing style. Do you care to risk it?"

I had propounded the scheme half-satirically. I did not really imagine that she would attempt to carry it out.

"Yes, I'll try it," she said simply. "Tomorrow night. Meanwhile I'll pack my things and express them to Boston and take the train over to New Haven tomorrow. I'll get off there, manage a make-up and come back here. You can judge of my make-up as my cousin and my acting of the part. Then we'll have to arrange for my escape. Until then—good-night."

She had gathered up her things and was out of the room before I quite realized that I was probably sending this girl to the electric chair.

CHAPTER EIGHT

IT was about ten o'clock on the succeeding night that Mary made her appearance. Topliss brought her up. Her long raincoat covered her make-up and the hood hid the rest of her. She was smiling, but very pale, and as she threw off her outer covering she looked toward me for approval. As she stood there in her glowering attitude there was nothing of Mary Cascadine.

Then her attitude changed; the eyes slowly dilated, the lips hung loose, the nostrils twitched; and into the face came staring imbecility which, as my fascinated gaze held, began to change to the look of the lunatic that, failing to comprehend, begins to wonder. Out of this leaped sudden wild fire to her eyes and the face was distorted into grinning madness. In some uncertainty I caught her by the wrists.

"What——"

And I looked into the laughing face of Mary Cascadine.

"That's for the police court," she said.

I sat down. Acting, acting, always acting! But acting or not, she should stay here and mix no more with the Conover case. She looked at me narrowly.

"What's the matter? Wasn't it good?"

"It was—damnably!" I said. "Damnably! But I can't let you risk it."

"You really have no reason for not allowing me to go," she said, "and so"—she backed toward the door—"watch the newspapers tomorrow for the wronged wife's story."

Her hand was on the door, but scarcely before mine closed on her wrists. "You shan't go, and that's the end of it," I said, and gripped the other wrist.

She struggled futilely.

"Let me go!" then in a lower tone: "Let me go!"

Our eyes met. "Why do you try to keep me?"

The fire mounted to my head. I forced her into a chair. "Sit there," I said, "and remember that I am stronger than you."

"I always knew that!" Her lips trembled. Somehow I knew she was not referring to physical strength.

"You do love Conover, do you?" I shouted, my teeth cutting my lips, so much did they chatter beyond my volition. "You do, do you? Then, by God, go and do what you want to do. He's nothing to me, and you're nothing to me. I don't care whether you love him or not. Do you understand that? I don't care. Go on; do what you like, but just remember, I don't care. You hear that? I don't care; I don't care. Not a damn, not a single damn. You hear that?"

I looked up. My eyes cleared, and then I saw that I was alone in the room.

CHAPTER NINE

I DID not sit there long.

Next evening I did not forget to put a .44 revolver in the pocket of my raincoat before I slipped out into the rainy, drizzling night. And then I made for the insane asylum. It was a long journey—several hours, I should imagine—and then the gray stone walls of the inclosure rose out of the mist, indicated by two globes of light over the high iron gateways.

I slunk into the shelter of the wall some distance from the light, slipped down on the wet grass-plot that encircled the walls.

A big motor lurched through the mist-bank, puffing uncertainly. Some confused shouting came to my ears; then a sharp distinct injunction:

"Wait, Connie! Ribsey's lost his cap."

College boys, some even with voices that had not changed to manly tones. A wild idea took hold of me. I ran forward with the white lamps for objective and caught the side of the car as it came to a puffing standstill and some one vaulted over the side.

"Say, you fellows!" I entreated them.

"Hello, who's that?" "What's up?" "What's that?"

"Look here, you men," I said, "will you help a fellow out? There's a girl that's going to be taken in there"—and I pointed to the gray walls—"and I'm in love with her; and I want to get her off. She's innocent."

"Hello! That's the bug-house, ain't it? Say, people, we've got a real live loony."

"Look here, men," I pleaded, "this is on the square. I swear it is. Any of you belong to the Alpha Delta? I'm an old St. Mark's boy. Any of my frat here?"

Somebody groped my hand out and got an answering grip.

"Say, you people"—this was "Ribsey"—"he's giving us the straight goods about the frat. No mistake about that. Want to take him up, Connie?"

"I don't care," replied the other. "We might get chased by the coppers, though."

"Say, old man"—this to me—"what's the difficulty?" asked the third boy.

"Why," said I, assuming my boyish tone, "they're going to bring a girl here tonight, and I want to help her to escape; that's all. And if you three chaps will help me we can do it all right."

"Well, they can't do anything to us but fine us if we're arrested. Make a big stir, wouldn't it? Nobody's going to accuse you, Connie, of needing money, with your dad owning most all the mutton in the country. Just a bit of a lark, that's all. Come on, re-nigger!"

"There it comes!" I said, as two lights swerved around a curve. "Shift the machine into the center of the road. Give me one of those motor-coats and a pair of goggles, if you've got another pair. Bring the auto square into the center of the road, and let me run the big shebang."

Somebody handed me a coat and a pair of goggles. "Look out, we're turning," said Connie; and now the machine lay athwart the road. "Mind your ammonia squirts, boys!" whispered 'Ribsey' tersely. "Say, you fellows, this beats anything in 'Stalky & Company.' Connie, you stick by the machine. 'Pickles' and I will jump 'em with the ammonia guns."

"Wait my word!" I warned.

The rip-splash of high-stepping horses in the mud, a furious Irish oath, and an ambulance drew up almost under the tonneau of the car.

"Clear the road, there!" shouted some one from behind the ambulance lamps.

"Have you got a doctor?" I shouted back.

Then some confused talking, and: "What do you want a doctor for?"

"Man almost dead. Bad smash. We'll reverse in a minute. Hold your horses."

I unbracketed one of the electric arcs from the bonnet of the car and crossed to the back of the ambulance. "Ribsey" and the boy they called "Pickles" followed me. The shutters of the ambulance were thrown open, and my light fell upon a white-jacketed negro, a man with eye-glasses, also white-jacketed, another in ordinary clothes, who looked like a police detective, and in the far corner a woman's dress. My arc-rays fell on her, and I saw that her arms were bound, and that the shoes and stockings that protruded from the skirt were those Mary Cascadine had assumed.

"What's all this?" asked the man with the eyeglasses.

"Need a doctor," I responded briefly. "Bad smash."

"Well, we can't stop," replied the man with the eyeglasses. "You bring your man along with us and we'll attend to him."

"Can't move him."

The eyeglassed man threw me an impatient, angry look. "Oh!" he said. "Let me see him."

"I'll show the way, sir," I said.

He stepped out into the mist, followed by the men. Under the sheer black side of the ambulance I stepped back and swung a hard fist under his jaw. He went down in the mud quite silently, and I stepped back to the lighted space.

The other men came from the vehicle, and we pitched into them without words. There was a terrific battle, but we got Mary, and the boys drove us to the vicinity of my home.

Connie wasted no time after landing us about the distance from Beeckman Place that I thought sufficient for secrecy. No sooner had I carried her out of the car and given them thanks than the owner of the car threw off the clutch, shoved down the lever and was off.

I walked, supporting Mary with an arm about her waist. It was no easy task, I assure you, and when I had entered the Beeckman Place basement unobserved, I deposited her on a kitchen chair and rubbed the muscles of my taxed arms ruefully. Mrs. Topliss awakened, we carried her upstairs to my room, and I left with my servant's wife instructions to attend Miss Cascadine, and money with which to purchase decent clothes in the morning.

CHAPTER TEN

YOU may well imagine that the next morning one was forced to look very carefully through the different journals in order to find an item that had nothing to do with the "wronged wife's confession" and the "attack of desperadoes." Mary had accomplished her task neatly; had abstracted a large loaf of white bread and was eating it ravenously. The man fell upon her and demanded payment; she explained the lack of money; he called the police. Mary went into hysterics, wept and cried; and when questioned by the lieutenant at the Tenderloin police station and soothed by the matron, told them that she was hungry, and that she had been afraid to hunt for work because she expected arrest. Questioned again, she clung to the matron and shrieked out something to the effect that he was going to kill her and she had not meant to stab him. She produced her wedding certificate and her marriage-ring, and gave them the address of her (supposed) parents in Dartmoor, told them the story of her going off, and cried and pleaded for mercy.

She reserved her mad scene for the last. The papers said that she was violently insane, assaulting the matron, striking the lieutenant heavily with clenched fist, hurling over a chair and sofa and shrieking at the top of her voice. An anesthetic was administered, the ambulance summoned,

and—the rest I have written. The police and press seemed to be in some doubt as to the reason of the attack, but were inclined to believe it engineered by confederates of the late James Stricker Conover, who wished to see Charles Conover executed and the memory of the dead man kept clean. The public mind was indeed in a whirl; but the sympathy seemed to be entirely with the "wronged wife" and with the accused cousin of the dead man. A reward was offered by the *Infernal* for the capture of the men who had attacked the ambulance and the return of the girl.

Zetter I sent hurrying back to Baltimore to insist on a speedy trial of Charles Conover, and bail him until the trial should come off. This time he had the backing of the newspapers.

When I went around to the Beeckman Place house about three o'clock the next day, Mrs. Topliss told me that Mary Cascadine had awakened early, had bathed, waved her hair and donned the garments purchased by the worthy woman and brought back in a cab which waited until Mary was ready to go her way to the Grand Central station, where, she told Mrs. Topliss, she intended to purchase a ticket and rejoin her luggage in Boston. Later in the day I received a telegram from her dated Boston, and telling me she had engaged passage on the White Star boat leaving for Queenstown the following day. Later I surmised bitterly that her act had been prompted only by prudence, and that Conover would soon join her on the other side.

But I, myself, was occupied in settling the case of the Dartmoor girl, and until that was off my mind I would not have room to condole with myself in the matter of personal afflictions. Needless to say, all newspapers were kept from "Mrs. Errol." In the course of a long conversation with her I explained that she was now in possession of ten thousand pounds; that "Frederick Errol" was dead, and that his father wished to shield his good name; that the name of Errol was fictitious, but that she was to make no attempt to discover the real one. That she was to change her name to whatever she liked, and that I would find her a place in Florida where she could live happily and bring up the child.

A week later she was a transformed being under the touch of the ready-made clothes as altered by the skillful fingers of Mrs. Topliss, and the baby, a radiant little being in lace and frills, was carried by a negro nurse to a ship bound for Jacksonville, while the mother followed with Mrs. Topliss. I took the Florida Limited a day later and joined her in that city, having previously purchased a small cottage and orange orchard outside Tallahassee, furnished it and engaged another servant. Here I left the girl, who clung to me weeping while she thanked me for my kindness, my last words being an injunction for secrecy; and as I explained that the money would disappear if she confided in any one, her later discreetness may be laid somewhat to that fact.

But before I returned to New York there had come a new and startling development.

I had bought a paper as my train passed through Augusta, Georgia, and folded it in my hand while I went into the Pullman diner and ordered my lunch. Then opening the paper the shock came. On its front page was the announcement that the New York papers having reached London, the photographs of James Stricker Conover were recognized as identical with those taken by the London police of a man calling himself Wickham, who had been tried and almost convicted of jewel robbery three months before.

They got nothing from him, however, and that night Professor Witherness, a hunchback old man, had asked to see Mr. Wickham, stating that he was a friend, and that Mr. Wickham had been with him on the night that the robbery was supposed to have taken place. The story seemed rather fishy; but he had the alibi of Witherness, and the police let him go.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

EXAMINATION of the passenger lists for the past few months revealed the fact that a man answering the description of

Professor Witherness, together with a companion, had crossed from Southampton to New York since that time, and had landed a few days before the murder of James Stricker Conover.

The "wronged wife" story being taken as truth, Professor Witherness was wanted as an additional witness to add strength to the newspaper stories of Stricker Conover's double life in London. The law did not care much about him.

The house in Maida Vale which the Professor had occupied, and where it was supposed that Wickham (alias maybe Errol and Conover) had spent part of his time added strength to the girl's story that her husband had remained away from her for days at a stretch.

There was more evidence, but there seemed no way of laying a finger on Anthony K. Witherness, PH.D., B.Sc., and M.S.P.R., author of "Mental Atrophy: A Menace," "The Recurrence of Atavism," and other illuminating discourses on brain trouble.

My dinner had received little attention while I read the paper, and now I pushed it away from me without eating it, merely ordering some fresh coffee and a liqueur. After a while I began to piece together the links.

When first arrested Wickham had seemed dull and preoccupied, and glanced always toward Witherness before answering questions.

Witherness was an authority on diseases of the brain. Reading the papers again, I discovered that he had also dabbled in hypnotism.

It was plain that Wickham (if he were Conover) would of his own volition not indulge in a jewelry robbery of five thousand pounds' value.

Therefore, if he had anything to do with the robbery it was not through any will of his own.

Wasn't it possible for the Professor to have some influence over Conover that would compel him to carry out his wishes?

When I turned into my upper berth I thrashed this over and over and got no solution. The thing seemed as hopelessly muddled as ever. I began all over again the next morning. Having finished my breakfast, I was sitting in the club-smoker when we came into Washington. A train-boy clambered aboard with the New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington papers. I bought one of each, and felt well rewarded when my eye fell upon an Associated Press story in each one of them.

Langham Ferris, a friend of Conover, said that he had seen Conover in London with just this very man described—white-haired, hump-backed. He had taken Conover's hand, shaken it, and gotten no sign of recognition.

On my arrival in New York I had another surprise awaiting me. It consisted of a cablegram from Mary Cascadine:

"Think I've solved mystery. Take first steamer. Wire me care American Express. Rush! MARY."

I immediately embarked for Europe.

When I crossed the Atlantic I realized that I had come to London not so much from a desire to hear just how she had "solved the mystery," but because she was there and had sent for me. There was no denying the fact that I loved the girl despite her past. We were soon together.

I held her hand for a moment with the curious feeling of a man who desires but does not care to kiss his wife in a public place; but the thought of Charles Conover made me release her hand.

"I've a hansom outside," I said. "Where shall we go? I haven't breakfasted yet."

"Richmond is a good place for breakfast," she smiled. "Let's go on a motor-bus," she added, clapping her hands. "That's better than the stuffy old underground." She seemed very much like a child at play. When we reached the "Yew Tavern" we had our breakfast on the balcony, where trees nodded, birds sang and lilacs peeped out above the box hedges, scenting the air.

"The lilacs remind one of Kew," she laughed.

"What about this mystery?" I asked sharply.

I felt a brute, for the light went out of her eyes. "Oh, yes!" she said slowly. "Yes."

She looked around as though to assure herself there was no one near enough to hear; but the porch was deserted save for ourselves.

"It's all right," I said impatiently.

She nodded.

"I think I have discovered the man who killed James Stricker Conover," she said.

"So I surmised from your cablegram. Now——"

"You want the explanation? Quite right."

She put both dimpled elbows on the table, the lace of her sleeves fell back, showing her firm, rounded arms. Somehow the essence of the lilacs seemed only a part of her. But she had begun.

CHAPTER TWELVE

"I ARRIVED in London the day before the police recognized Stricker Conover's photographs; went to a quiet little hotel in Russell Square, and—but that's personal and doesn't interest you."

She passed over my protest, continuing: "It seemed to me that this house in Maida Vale held clues, so I wanted to see it. I drove out there. It was shuttered and had drawn blinds, and the gate was locked; but I hadn't gone ten yards back when a hansom pulled up and somebody called my name. I looked around and there was Tessie Beadle—you know the girl—one of my old chums."

I nodded.

"Well, Tessie is a bad character; you know that. She goes in for stealing jewelry; very clever at it, too. She has very good manners, and she manages her thefts with forged letters of introduction; then she gets invited to balls and things, and a great many jewels disappear.

"I understand," I said.

"Well, anyhow, Tessie seemed awfully glad to see me, and asked what I was doing in that district. I told her I was out for a walk, and she said she wanted to have a long talk with me. So she took me into—where do you think?—the house next-door to Professor Witherness's former home.

"Naturally I was somewhat surprised, but I didn't say anything. Tessie had one of the most villainous-looking servants I ever saw bring her some whisky and cigarettes. While we were sitting there a man's head and shoulders came, straight up, through the carpet. I shrieked, but Tessie quieted me, saying it was only a trap-door to the cellar. The man closed the door and half-staggered across the room. There was blood about his lips. He didn't say 'How-d'-ye-do' or anything; just picked up my empty glass, poured out half a tumbler of whisky and drank it off. Then I noticed something very peculiar about him, but forgot it the next second when he begged our pardon in a very quiet, apologetic sort of way.

"Tessie winked at him. 'This is a "pal" of mine. She's all right.' But he frowned and shook his head. Then Tessie introduced him as Mr. Brown and me as Miss Jones. 'I'm sure I beg your pardon, Miss Jones,' said he, 'but I'm in the last stages of consumption, and if I had known you two were here I shouldn't have come in so suddenly.' He went out after that—not the way he arrived, but by the door.

"'Who is he?' I asked Tessie. Tessie swore she didn't dare tell me; but after a while she did, anyhow, saying that he was 'Harry Argument,' so-called, and had been her 'side-partner' on two or three robberies before he was nearly caught and had to run away. 'Jewel thief?' I asked. 'Best in the world,' she answered. 'Before he went to Africa and got that consumption from sleeping in swamps and places——' 'What was he doing in Africa?' I asked, for by now I was wondering where that trap-door led to. 'Oh, he——' Then she looked at me and said he was in Tangier keeping out of the way of extradition. Now I happen to know there aren't any swamps around Tangier, for I was there myself, and if you go inland from there you strike the desert. I didn't say anything, though, and after a while we went away. I haven't been near

the place since then, nor seen Tessie. And then I wired you."

"And you think?"

"I think that house next-door was in some way connected with that thieves' boarding-house; and I think the trap-door led to it. This man Harry Argument had a very peculiar mark on the back of his hand —*a white crescent-shaped scar.*"

She waited, watching me. I put together the evidence, linking it with imagination.

This man was in the swampy section of Africa; so was Professor Witherness. This man had a crescent-shaped scar on his hand; so had Professor Witherness. This man apparently came from the house where Professor Witherness lived. He was a well-known jewel thief. It is then only fair to assume that he had some connection with Witherness.

But here conflicting evidence broke me.

"There's only one thing to do," I said finally, "and that's to get into the house and find out what's in there. We can't call in the police, because if we convicted Witherness or 'Argument' of the crime that would destroy the worth of your story. There's only one thing to do—I'll have to get in the house myself."

"I'll go with you," she said.

"You most certainly will not," I contradicted.

We argued this out, but I refused to yield my point.

At one o'clock I left Mary Cascadine at Russell Square, but not before she had put her hands on my shoulder and with a sudden abandon asked me not to go to Maida Vale.

"What does it matter, anyhow?" she asked. "Charlie Conover is safe—and—I'd rather—oh, I don't want you to go; I'm afraid—you will be——"

But I only laughed, disengaged her hands and bade her good-night.

As the hansom drew up a block away from the place my fingers gripped the revolver in one pocket of my overcoat; the other pocket held a pair of steel pincers and a burglar's jimmy.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MARY had told me that the house in question was the fourth from Heuston Lane, so down Heuston Lane I walked to the rear of the block. Carefully counting twice from the corner I assured myself of the garden gate to 960, the Professor's house. It was iron-barred and padlocked, but instruction received in the art of opening locks from a burglar unconvicted through my efforts made padlocks a trifle. I dropped the lock over the wall, and pulled open the gate just enough to admit my entrance, closing it after me without noise. Then I skulked among some gooseberry bushes and made the rear of the house. There was a basement opening. I used pincers and jimmy on the lock and went through the stone-paved servants' quarters on tiptoe, pausing at the flight of steps to listen and to shield my face with a domino. The stairs creaked as I passed up, but when I waited at the head of the steps there was still no reason to suppose my mission had been discovered. The first-floor hall was deserted and smelled of coal-gas. There were no lights, so I went up the stairs to the second floor. Still no light, and the same on the third floor. Then I began trying the knobs of the doors. Each opened easily until I came to a rear room on the second flight. The knob resisted and I utilized jimmy and pincers again. Then pocketing my tools I snapped on my electric arc, holding it in one hand and the revolver in the other, and entered the room.

The arc ray fell upon the figure of a man in blue pongee pajamas, his head propped up on pillows, a cigarette between the fingers of his left hand, a black something in his right. The face was thin, wasted, haggard; his smile mocked me. It was Harry Argument.

"Come in and sit down," he said. "It was mighty nice for you to call at this hour. I couldn't sleep, and I was getting a little tired of waiting to croak all by myself."

"You'd better drop that gun and put up your hands, Harry Argument," I said angrily.

He drew placidly on the cigarette, but

spat out the smoke and coughed; the coughing continued shaking him from head to foot, the revolver falling from his hand. He made no attempt to recover it; his face was gray, and it was plain that he was suffering. Finally composing himself, he dropped the cigarette into a cuspidor, wiping the blood from his lips with a handkerchief which he took from the breast pocket of his pajama-jacket.

"You may as well put down the gun," he said. "You can't scare me with it. And now, please take a seat and tell me why you came here?"

"Headquarters, Mulberry street, New York——" I began.

"Oh, no, you don't, friend," he returned. "That won't do. You're not a policeman nor a detective, because some one has conveniently put them on another track. That Tessie Beadle or her friend sent you up here. They've played me a low-down trick, and if I was going to live I wouldn't forget it. But what puzzles me is just what you are. You aren't a 'gun' or a 'dip,' or anything in the line of a genuine gentleman 'gay-cat,' are you? I suppose you must be from the way you opened the door. To tell the truth, I'm not such a fool as I look, though. If I hadn't realized that it was all up with me I shouldn't have made that dive next-door the way I did. Tess recognized me. Somebody was trying that trap-door business this afternoon, but I plugged it up with a cotton charge. But get busy, mister man, and put me next to why you came. I'm not a bit sleepy, and quite willing to talk. I'm good for about two hours, and then me for the swift croak. It's consumption and it's got me for keeps. Went to see the King's doctor last week and he gave me a month with proper care. I've been boozing and smoking and trying to burn up a few of the dollars I can't take to the grave, so it's about all up with me. Anything you want to know?"

"Yes," I replied, "I want to know where Professor Witherness is?"

He laughed and then started to cough again, pointing with one shaking finger to a cupboard. "Here's the key," he said presently, holding out one of a bunch. "Unlock that closet and you'll find all that's left of the Professor."

I obeyed this, after taking the precaution to pick up his revolver from the floor. The cupboard opened, I put in my hand and drew out a shock of dirty-white hair—a wig—a heavy lump of hard rubber with some straps attached, a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles and a mustache of the same color as the wig. A wave of understanding came over me.

"You've been posing as the Professor?" I asked.

"Surest thing you know. I was hiking back to the coast when I fell in with Old Whiskers." He paused and looked at me queerly. "I guess you think I'm a damn fool for telling you all this; but the truth is, friend, that I've played the biggest game of any man in years—and I don't like to die without letting somebody know about it. By the bye, you haven't told me yet who you are. You're not one of us, for if you were you'd have pulled some wise-cracking stuff before now. Wise me up. How did you get next?"

I remained silent. He shrugged his shoulders. "Tit for tat," he said. "No story from you, none from me. What's the trouble, man? I can't last a day."

"I'll tell you this much," I said, "and that is, I believe very confidently that you murdered James Stricker Conover."

"What about the poor little wife?" he sneered. "Say, friend, I've got you placed now. You had something to do with doping up that yarn, didn't you? And, by Heavens, for nerve and imagination that's got all creation beat! Fancy me, with the inside facts of the case, reading that! I tell you, it was rich! Put me wise, will you?"

"After you've told me your story, I will," I replied.

"Oh, very well!" he said, lighting another cigarette. "See that?" he said, as he held the little paper tube aloft. "That's ten more minutes gone off my life; but what do I care? Anyhow, you can't get the swag because it ain't here, and I'm not going to tell you where it is. I've got four little sisters growing up who won't know that's

stolen money. It's as honest as making your living out of Wall Street—honester. Where was I?"

"You had met the Professor on the Congo," I reminded him.

"Right you are!" he acceded. "Well, Old Whiskers had lost his servant with miasmatic fever and was pretty well hipped with the great white plague himself. He wanted me to stay and nurse him and look after him. I got the old geezer back in some kind of shape and we pushed on down into the sandy reaches. Meanwhile he was giving me a lot of valuable lessons in mesmerism. He took a shine to the shape of my head and said I had latent mesmeric powers, and so he taught me the trick. It's easy. Look here!"

His glittering eyes turned on me. I looked away. "Never mind about that," I said. "You get ahead with your story."

"Good Lord, man, what's a poor consumptive to do to you?" he protested. "Well, all right, if you're afraid. Where was I? Oh, yes! The Professor died."

He paused, waving his burning cigarette. "Old Whiskers had a bunch of money, all right, and I collared that. Then I struck back for the coast—year and a half I'd been in that hell-swamp of a place then—but before I got back I was taken down with the same old plague, and had to go by easy stages then. I landed at Capetown finally by a tramp that was picking up ivory off the coast, and was laid up in the hospital there for over two months. Well, by the time I landed back here in London there wasn't much of the Professor's money left; but I recollected the address of his house out here in Maida Vale and came out. I had the keys and got in all right, but then I realized that if I was going to live there I'd have to have some kind of an excuse. Then it flashed over me that the police were looking for me, and that I'd better lay low and be the Professor. So I hikes out and buys the whiskers, mustache, hump and specs; and there I am to the life—see? It was then I met Conover and hypnotized him. You see, I got him under—well, I had him hypnotized, all right—and I could make him go anywhere and do anything I wanted to—and—he only got out of control once—time he was arrested—and I had to go to the cell and hypnotize him all over again. Easy after you've done it once. We pulled off three prime touches; then a guy came up and spoke to him in the street—called him Stricker Conover, you see? 'Course he didn't know anything—hypnotized, you see—couldn't recognize a friend. I got to remembering all about this Stricker Conover disappearance—all that. Then this famous safe and jewel collection. Made him answer me in his sleep—hypnotic—saw what a fool I'd been—took him to America. I hired the motor—took off my makeup when I struck New York. We went down to Black Beeches that night, and he showed me the cigar-box. Still hypnotized, you see. Great mind that fellow—electric combination — touch-button — skylight revolves—no ventilator at all—just little iron cap where the jewels were packed away—couldn't find it in a thousand years—had to press button four times hard, one time easy—never find it in God's world by yourself. Good Lord, what pieces of ice! I tried to steal some—he saw me and fought. I picked up a dagger on the desk—didn't want to hurt him—slipped away—no use—he was after me again—and I let him have it—didn't mean to kill him—over he went——"

He was coughing out great clots of blood. "Keep quiet," I said.

He nodded. "That's all," he whispered. "Some stones!" he gasped. "Couldn't sell them—too well known—couldn't cut—no use—afraid—take 'em, old pal!—under pillow—inside slip——"

His eyes dilated; into his face came a look of horror that I never wish to see again. He seemed about to speak but could not. Convulsive shudders ran through him. Then lifting up his hand, he tried to clench his fist and failed. With a quick intake of air, he fell back on the pillows, his head bumping against the board, his neck strained, his mouth open, blood staining the slip.

When I found that I was alone in the room I rose and removed the hard packet from under the pillow.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WHEN I arrived at my hotel, the Ledord, something like forty minutes later, the floor-valet, who had been waiting for me by the key-rack, gave me an address on a slip of paper.

"It's a lady, sir," he said. "She 'as called up five or six times, and says as yer must come himmedgejate as soon as hever yer comes in."

It was a short distance to Russell Square, and I covered it in a hansom in something like five minutes. The doorman at the Russell Square Hotel was waiting for me, and said that the lady, Miss Henley, was expecting me in her private sitting-room. To join her was but the work of an instant, and with no further ado I caught her in my arms and strained her tightly to my bosom. She did not struggle to resist me, for it seemed as if she really expected such a greeting, and I presently gazed straight down into her humid eyes.

"The case is finished," I said softly. "I've seen that miserable object, Harry Argument, and caught him passing away on his bed. He confessed that he was the hump-backed Professor Witherness—fell in with Conover and had him hypnotized. He was with Conover when he returned to America, and in a fight stabbed and killed him."

"And he was in the house I designated?"

"Yes; here are the jewels he stole from Conover and returned to me."

"Then there remains only one more mystery to be explained. I know you thought I ran that risk from sheer love for young Conover, but you made an error, dear. I had a deeper—far deeper motive. It was not actuated by love of that innocent, blundering young fool, but I wanted to show you, the man I really cared for, that I had some good qualities left in my character, and my sacrifice was one way of showing it."

"God bless you, Mary Cascadine!" I muttered. "It was a noble self-sacrifice. And to think that I have won the love of such a wonderful woman!"

I caught her in my arms and strained her to my heart.

BOY BANDIT SENT TO ATLANTA

BERNARD A. MARON, twenty-two, the "boy bandit" who has served three prison terms and is alleged to have been implicated in many important bank robberies, pleaded guilty before Federal Judge Foster and was sentenced to serve three years in Atlanta Penitentiary for absconding with $15,000 from the branch of the Capitol National Bank, Ludlow and Canal streets.

Maron's custom was to advertise for an experienced bank clerk, teller or cashier and ask that the applicant inclose references. He used the references and names sent to him in applying for bank positions. When he went to the Capitol National Bank he used the name and reference of a reputable bank clerk.

He was arrested by William Brown, agent of the Department of Justice, and taken to Police Headquarters. On his way from there to the Federal Building he escaped from several deputy marshals and was next heard from in Chicago. There, using the same system, he applied for a position in the West Side National Bank under the name of William J. Engel.

In that bank he was confronted by a clerk who knew Engel. Maron escaped before the police arrived, but was arrested July 8 in the office of the Chicago Tribune, where he had gone to insert another advertisement.

May 15, 1919, the authorities say, Maron stole $100,000 in diamonds from Meyerowitz Bros., No. 170 Broadway, where he was then employed. Part of the loot was found in his mother's home in Brooklyn. It was for this robbery he was sentenced in General Sessions to serve ten years in Sing Sing. He was paroled after four and one-half years.

[This story was broadcast by WJZ]

Drawn Teeth

By JOE BURKE

AFTER Sheriff Steve O'Donnell cleaned up the Gopher gang, imprisoning for life the few who escaped his two guns, his worthy wife implored him to hand in his symbols of authority and take up business in civil life.

"I know the law must be upheld, Steve," the good woman pleaded, "but I can't stand it any longer. I know you are fearless; I know you never took human life without just cause, but I can't bear it any longer. We're getting along into middle age. You've done your duty without favor to any one. Why not grant me the only favor I've ever asked of you, Steve—to lay aside your guns and shield forever?"

Steve O'Donnell did as she requested.

"And you must never carry another gun," the worthy little wife added.

Ex-Sheriff O'Donnell promised.

A month later the ex-sheriff bought the general store in Hopkinson and settled down to the tranquil life of a small-town merchant. Mrs. O'Donnell was happy, and told her neighbors so.

But Steve chafed under the quiet routine. He longed for the old excitement of man-hunting.

But time is a wonderful healer, and it finally curbed Steve O'Donnell's craving for action. Three years more found him fat, bald-headed and looking on "action" as a thing of the past—for him, anyway.

"The old woman may be right," he would ruminate, scowling and clinching his hands, "but I'm hanged if I can get used to it entirely. But a promise to the old woman is a promise."

And he would close his eyes and try to forget the past, and act like a quiet, peace-loving merchant.

A somber, graystone prison stood not many miles from Hopkinson. Sid Pace, the last living member of the Gopher gang, was incarcerated there, paying the penalty of his misdeeds. Of the four men sentenced for life who escaped the deadly guns of the ex-sheriff, Pace was now the only survivor. The other three crooks had succumbed to the effects of their wounds.

Pace had never forgotten the sheriff who sent him to durance vile. His wounds were pretty dangerous when he was taken, but he lived and grew strong with a better thought in his mind—to escape and kill Steve O'Donnell. News from the outside world frequently gets into prisons, as law violators are coming and going all the time. Sid Pace listened to the gossip of the new arrivals, chuckled in his cell, and with deep cunning planned an early get-away.

"So the ole fool's turned in his star an' promised his old woman he'd never tote a gun again," Pace sneered maliciously. He paced his narrow cell like a wild beast and added: "One of the best two-gun fighters in the whole State puttin' away his hardware for a woman. Blah! An' Steve O'Donnell will keep his word, too. What a chance for me to nail him unarmed!"

"Guess we'll call it off for tonight, boys," he announced, walking to the back door and shoving a heavy bolt. "We'll play it out tomorrow night."

Hixon and Smalley, after a sleepy "Goodnight," departed for their homes. Sheriff Hines tarried. The ex-sheriff looked up

at him questioningly, and for the first time noted his troubled look.

"What's on yore mind, sheriff?" asked O'Donnell, blowing out the last lamp and walking to the front of the store. The sheriff trailed in his wake, and only spoke when they stood outside the padlocked door.

"I'm a-goin' yore way a bit, Steve," Hines drawled. "I feel like a little fresh air before hittin' the hay. Don't mind, d'ya?"

The ex-sheriff glanced at Hines sharply and frowned. The night was cool, one of those invigorating nights in the early fall. O'Donnell knew that his successor was not in the habit of walking for his health, as he was confounded lazy. There was another motive in his mind, and the ex-sheriff was going to learn it at once. As he stepped onto the road he confronted Hines.

"Get it off yore chest, sheriff," he challenged, his faded gray eyes narrowing to pin-points. "What you snoopin' around fo'? Have I or the old woman broke the law?"

Hines looked straight into his old friend's angry face, placed a light hand on his shoulder and gripped it for an instant. O'Donnell stiffened under the pressure, but stood erect. Then the new sheriff spoke:

"Steve, do yer still go about without toting a gun?"

"I shore do, sheriff. Why?"

The other shook his head and pulled a six-shooter from its holster at his hip.

"Ye'd better take this t'night, Steve," said Hines, holding the .45 toward him. "When Dud Mitchell called me to the door he said Sid Pace escaped from prison."

The ex-sheriff gasped at the news, his eyes suddenly taking on the old light of battle against the wrong-doer. The revolver which Sheriff Hines held in his broad palm fascinated him, and his hand moved slowly toward the death-dealing weapon, then stopped.

"You want to deputize me, sheriff?" O'Donnell asked. "You want me to help hunt Pace down? Give me——"

But as Hines proffered the gun he recoiled, and his hand fell limply to his side. He shook his head sadly. His faded eyes showed traces of anxiety.

"No, sheriff," said O'Donnell, "I promised the old woman I'd never pack another gun or shed human blood. She's happy now, pore soul, for she knows Steve O'Donnell never breaks his word."

Sheriff Hines smiled. His respect for his predecessor was one hundred per cent. He well knew the ex-sheriff's unblemished record, and realized the crushing effect his promise was inflicting.

"You got me wrong, Steve," Hines drawled out, still holding out the weapon. "Sid Pace threatened to get you if he ever crashed out of prison. I got a cousin who's a screw in the jail. He heard Pace say that he'd get you face forward. That's why I want you to take this six-gun. The sneakin' skunk may be headed this way and layin' for you right now. Take it, Steve."

The ex-sheriff stiffened erect. Shoulders squared, head thrown back, he took a step forward, brushing aside the weapon as he looked into the other's face.

"Sheriff," said O'Donnell slowly, "I'm right sorry you misjudged me. As I think I've remarked before, Steve O'Donnell never broke his word. And furthermore, sheriff, I don't need a bodyguard nor a gun, either. I've landed Sid Pace in jail before, and I can do it again. Don't you worry none about him lookin' for any more of my game. And what does he know 'bout my promise to the old woman?"

"No offense intended, Steve," offered Hines regretfully. "I'll walk with yer ter ther next corner, if yer don't object. Guess I'll look around ther railroad station a bit."

The sheriff nodded, linked arms with the older man and they both strode on. At the next street Hines shook O'Donnell's hand and bade him "Good-night." The ex-sheriff's little farm and cozy homestead was nearly a mile further east, located at the branch of a forked road, isolated and remote from other habitations. He always walked to and from his place of business. When asked the reason why, he explained by saying: "I'm gettin' too fat."

With a slow, easy stride O'Donnell passed from the gravel road and plunged into the single wagon path. A fall moon lit up the peaceful valley, twinkling stars adding their radiance to its luminous glow. Peace and

contentment were seemingly abroad. Nocturnal beasts and insects joined the singing brooks and wind-blown leaves in their resonant chorus. Then from out of the shadowy night, between the trees, shone a light from the window of the ex-sheriff's home. Steve smiled as he bent his steps homeward. A shadow suddenly shaped itself across his path. The ex-sheriff halted abruptly, his right hand streaking to his hip. He almost groaned when he found no gun. The shadow came toward him.

"Stick 'em up, O'Donnell," rasped a hoarse voice, as the escaped leader of the old gang confronted the ex-sheriff. "Comes kinda nat'ral to feel fer yore hardware, don't it? Kinda upset yer like to find yore not totin' 'em any more? I ain't so shore, though, since yer left the new sheriff. Turn 'round. That's right. Don't get panicky; I'm not gonna plug yer in the back."

Sid Pace was an adapt at the frisking game. When he finished his search he was in possession of everything of value which O'Donnell carried. Money, watch, ring—everything except his clothes and pocket handkerchief. But he found no gun. The jail-bird laughed outright.

"What's the joke, Pace?" asked O'Donnell, his eyes straying from the menacing gun in the escaped convict's hand to his prison-pallored visage. If Sid Pace hadn't been so cock-sure of his victim he would have also noted a faint gathering of furrows at the tails of the ex-sheriff's eyes. But he didn't, and he answered with a guffaw of conceit and bravado:

"The joke's on yo', ole has-been. Everybody in Niles County knows that yore ole woman jawed yer out of packin' a gun after yer quit ther sheriff's job. Ther boys up in th' pen were tickled pink when they heard it, fo' they knew, yer ole skunk, that yo'd keep yore word. Imagine me stickin' yer up if yer were packin' a six-gun! Not in a million years! Don't yer see the joke? Me stickin' up ther best gun thrower in Niles County; cleanin' him out, and"—he chuckled mirthlessly—"I just cleaned out yore house. Now, beg, damn yer, for I'm gonna kill yer like I would a rattler!"

Unmoved, the ex-sheriff's narrowed eyes never wavered from the sinister face of the convict, who now had the gun pressed against his body.

"You robbed my home, eh?" retorted O'Donnell. "You didn't need ter tell me that, Sid Pace; I knew it as soon as I set eyes on ther gun yore holdin'. That's a gun I carried under my armpit all ther time I was sheriff. There ain't another gun like it in these whole parts. When I laid it away at the bottom of ther ole brass-bound trunk where yo' found it, I drew its teeth and flung them out the window. There wasn't another slug in th' house, or hereabouts, that would fit it, so pull the trigger and be damned! The gun ain't loaded!"

With a cry of baffled rage the convict sprang back, his finger working the trigger, but the hammer's staccato clicks recorded empty cylinders. With a curse he hurled the useless weapon at the ex-sheriff's grinning face. O'Donnell dexterously dodged and swung a heavy fist against the would-be killer's jaw, sending him to the earth with a groan. When he revived he was in jail, and Steve was saying to the Sheriff:

"The ole woman made me promise I'd never pack another gun, but when it came to parting with my hardware it was like plantin' a good friend under ther sod; so I drew the gun's teeth and, unbeknown to the ole woman, I hid it away in the trunk. I kept my promise, Sheriff, but my old gun saved my life!"

WOMAN, 95, IS SENTENCED

ROSE SAPRITA, sentenced to six months imprisonment, on a charge of vagrancy by Magistrate Gresser in Jamaica Court recently, told the court that her age was 95 years. She said that she lived alone in a two room shack down by the railroad tracks and was unable to work to support herself.

Patrolman Dollard, who made the arrest, said that she had been seen in tatters about the streets of Jamaica for several months.

The Clue in the Watch

By CARL GARRET HODGES

BILL RIDDER slouched lower in his seat and hugged the wheel of the powerful roadster. The headlights were boring a clean hole in the murky darkness and the roaring car gathered speed with every touch of his impatient foot on the accelerator. Bill was in a hurry. He was headed for a roadhouse a little farther on that was operated by a shady character. This cabaret bore the appropriate sign of "The Dew Drop Inn."

Ridder was anxious to see Cy Gorman, the proprietor, and for still another reason he wanted to be in the Dew Drop at exactly seven o'clock.

When the lights of the roadhouse came into view Bill stepped on the gas and sent the automobile roaring into view down the road. At Hairpin Curve he threw all his weight behind the wheel and twisted it to the right to make the dangerous bend. But Bill was unlucky. As the car skidded around the corner he caught a fleeting glance of glaring headlights in the road before him. He was dimly aware of the roar of another racing engine. Then a sickening lurch, a smash and tearing of metal, a crash of glass and a suffocating haze of smoke from the engine. Bill's car turned turtle and threw him into the road. He lay there, still as death.

The other car was luckier. It made unsteady progress down the road for a few yards, and then stopped, with the screech of hastily applied brakes. A man stepped out and walked back to the wreck. With a flashlight he examined the overturned car, and then turned his attention to Bill, who was lying senseless in the road. He knelt by the prone figure and flashed the light upon Ridder's face. It was cut badly by the glass of the broken windshield. The man with the light shrank back in surprise.

"My God!" he said, "Bill Ridder, of all men."

He passed experienced hands over the fallen man's pockets and mumbled to himself: "A jimmy, a gat and all the rest. Ten to one he's got a job on for tonight." He laughed grimly to himself. "But I don't believe he'll be able to pull anything very soon."

The figure beneath him stirred and moaned feebly. A trickle of blood escaped the tight lips and dropped from the corner of the injured man's mouth. The kneeling one grasped Ridder's wrists and rubbed them briskly. He stirred, and slowly his eyes opened. As Bill's glance met the blinding glare of the flashlight he blinked foolishly and passed searching fingers over his head and face. As his hands showed the red stain of blood he gasped: "Who in blazes are you, and what the devil's happened?" He grinned wanly as he added: "Where's the rest of the regiment?"

The kneeling man laughed. "Why, Bill, you're not mixed up in war. I'm Greeman, the District Attorney. Your car and mine had a little disagreement over the right of way." And as Ridder frowned, Greeman spoke again: "I don't think that machine of yours is hurt much. A mashed fender and, maybe a cracked cylinder-head. When I get home I'll send out somebody to tow her in."

Bill held up a detaining hand. "What time is it, Greeman?"

Greeman looked at his watch. "Just exactly a quarter to seven."

Ridder tried to sit up, and Greeman tried to restrain him. Bill's face flushed, and he asked: "Your car able to run? Can you

take me on to Dew Drop? I promised to meet a guy there at seven o'clock."

Greeman nodded. "I got free with a couple of wobbly wheels and a smashed fender. I'll take you back to the Dew Drop, but candidly, Bill, you want to meet Gorman, don't you? Why don't you ditch that gang of crooks and go straight? Remember, you haven't been away from prison very long."

Bill grinned amiably. "I won't forget it. You're the guy that sent me up, but I ain't blamin' you. Did your duty, as you saw it. You are square. It's McCarty that did me. He's a big man politically, but he's a dirtier crook than I am, by far. He's rakin' in hush-money by bucketfuls. I'll give you the proof some time. McCarty manufactured the evidence against me on that Cranmore robbery, and he did it 'cause I cut him out with Rose Coughlin. And, believe me, it didn't do him any good to put me away for five years. I'm goin' to settle his hash some of these fine days, and then go straight."

Greeman's hand patted Bill's shoulder. "Go straight, boy, before it's too late. You are heading straight for the chair."

Ridder grunted with pain as Greeman helped him into the latter's car. The District Attorney got behind the wheel, turned the machine, and in a few minutes drove up to the ramshackle porch of the inn. As the District Attorney helped Ridder out Cy Gorman came to assist him. Bill leaned against Gorman's shoulder while Greeman returned to his roadster and drove away. Gorman watched the car disappear in the darkness with mistrust in his eyes. He turned to Ridder. "Who is that bird, anyhow?"

"Greeman, the District Attorney," he explained, and Gorman shrank away. "Don't worry, Cy; he ain't after any of your poisoned hootch." His eyes took on a thoughtful gleam. "Greeman's against us, but he's a square guy just the same."

Limping slightly, Bill walked into the lighted hall with Cy Gorman. As they entered a cuckoo clock called the hour of seven. Cy grinned evilly in what was meant for a reassuring smile. "Well, Bill, it's seven o'clock and everything's jake with us."

Bill smiled as best he could with his bloody face. "Seven o'clock and everything jake—so far."

It was almost seven-thirty before Greeman stopped his car in front of police headquarters and ran up the wide stone steps. As he entered the building he noticed that there weren't any men anywhere about, and thought that something must have happened. A strange air of mystery pervaded the place. Chief of Police Binkert was at his desk telephoning. As Greeman entered Binkert was speaking into the transmitter: "Hold her, then, and bring her here if possible. I'll see what I can get out of her." He hung up the receiver with an angry click and turned to Greeman with a brief nod. The district attorney noticed the lines of worry in the Chief's face and knew something was in the wind.

"What's up, Chief; somebody break jail?" he asked.

Binkert mopped his perspiring face with his handkerchief.

"No, not breaking jail, but it'll come to that if the crooks get much bolder. Some gangster's done for McCarty. Killed him about half an hour ago. And McCarty the best detective on the force."

Greeman gasped.

"McCarty dead? In a gun-fight?"

"No; McCarty never had a chance. Looks like a case of out-and-out murder, although whoever fixed him tried to make it look like suicide."

Greeman was shocked, but he was curious, too.

"How did it happen? Tell me all about it."

The Chief was eloquent.

"Well, I'd better make a long story short. About half an hour ago, just seven o'clock, the phone rang right here on the desk. I picked up the receiver and said, 'Hello,' when a choking, gasping voice came over the wire, and kept repeating, 'This is McCarty. I'm shot. This is McCarty—McCarty—McCarty—McCar——' and trailed off just like that, as if he might have keeled over. I didn't know what to do for a min-

ute, but I sent a couple of the boys over to his apartment—you know he lives over on King street—to see what was up. They had to break in his door, and when they did they found him curled up on the floor, a gat in his right hand, the telephone lying under him, a bullet in his shoulder, another right through the heart, and him dead as a door-nail. Two bullets was fired out of his gun and nothing was touched. It looks like suicide, but I'll swear somebody killed him."

Greeman was not so positive.

"Maybe it was suicide," he said. "Was McCarty despondent over anything?"

Binkert grinned.

"No, and, besides, McCarty loved himself too much to pull that act. I don't like to knock a dead man, but McCarty did have a bad case of big-head. No man on the force liked him, but I had to keep him, because he was a good detective."

"You said your men found the gun?"

"Yes, it was McCarty's, with two shots fired. Fingerprints on the gat were McCarty's. Fingerprints on the telephone were McCarty's. It looks simple, but I know damn well that somebody killed him."

Greeman was still curious.

"Any motive? Any suspects?"

Binkert shrugged.

"I'm taking a long chance on Bill Ridder. You know Bill ain't been free very long, and McCarty is the one that sent him up. Bill probably remembers those five wasted years behind the bars, and killed McCarty to get even. And then, too, both of them were kinda sweet on Rose Coughlin. They might have had a scrap over her. Anyhow, I sent Luecke over to bring Rose in. That's who I was telephoning to when you arrived. If Rose can't give us any real lead she can probably tell us where to find Bill Ridder. I'd like to discover where Bill was at seven o'clock."

Greeman smiled.

"You might as well strike Bill Ridder off your list. I can vouch for his not killing McCarty."

"How in the devil can you?"

"You said McCarty called you up at seven o'clock. That means that at seven o'clock McCarty was still alive. Ridder didn't kill him, because at a quarter of seven Ridder and I had a smash-up out at Hairpin Curve. I took him to Dew Drop Inn. We arrived there at seven o'clock sharp. Clearly, it was impossible for Ridder to be at Dew Drop Inn, fifteen miles away, and at the same moment be engaged in the murder of McCarty over in King street. I think you're on the wrong track. Ridder is innocent." Greeman smiled.

Ten minutes later Detective Luecke arrived with Rose Coughlin in tow. She was a haughty beauty, and even Binkert could get nothing of value from her beyond the fact that the last time she had seen Ridder was at six-twenty, when he had told her that he was going to Dew Drop Inn. This fitting in so nicely with Greeman's story of the smash-up, the police were more in the dark then ever. They sent Rose home.

Two other detectives entered with the evidence from McCarty's rooms. The gun was evidently his own. The copies of the fingerprints they had taken were McCarty's also. The only other article was McCarty's watch. It was not running, having evidently run down and stopped.

Binkert shoved the articles into a neat pile on his desk in front of him. Luecke picked up the watch.

"I'd like to give this tick-tock the once-over, Chief. You know I didn't go to McCarty's rooms. I was talking with Rose Coughlin."

Luecke walked over to a chair and sat down. He examined the watch closely, taking the back from the case, rewinding it, and moving the hands. Finally he sat still, musing. Then he rose to his feet and walked over to Greeman.

"I believe you said you left Ridder at Dew Drop Inn. Could you get me there in a hurry?"

Greeman nodded, and led the way out to his car. They climbed in, Greeman started the engine, and they were soon speeding on their way to Dew Drop Inn. When they passed Ridder's overturned car, Luecke ventured a few questions.

"You said it was a quarter of seven when

you had the smash-up, and exactly seven when you reached the inn with Ridder?"

Greeman nodded in assent. Then he asked:

"You still think that Ridder is the guilty man?"

Luecke smiled vaguely.

"I'll be surprised if it doesn't prove to be so."

When they reached the inn they found Ridder seated alone in a corner at a table eating a light supper. He looked up as they entered, but did not seem surprised to see them and continued eating. Luecke's right hand rested lightly in a sagging coat pocket as he and Greeman approached Ridder's table.

The detective spoke sharply.

"Ridder, I want you for the murder of McCarty. You've got an alibi patched up, but it's no good. I can break it all to pieces. Rose told me all about it."

Ridder's face flamed.

"You're a liar, she did not," he roared.

Luecke smiled.

"Not until I told her that we got you after a running fight, and that it was too late to get any admission out of you, because you died. The girl broke down and told us all the details—how you killed McCarty, and then made arrangements with her to call the station on the phone at seven o'clock, in imitation of McCarty's dying voice. You even told her what to say, so no one would be suspicious. The police thought McCarty was killed at seven, and naturally you couldn't do it because you were here at the inn, fifteen miles away from McCarty's house. You had an iron-clad alibi, but Rose got chicken-hearted. Now, then, how are you going to deny such evidence?"

The crook's face paled, and he made a hopeless gesture.

"You may as well make a clean breast of it," Luecke went on. "It may save you from the chair."

This promise made the despondent man brighten a little.

"It's my only hope," he muttered. "Yes, I killed McCarty. I told Greeman I'd show him up some day for the dirty crook he was. I admit I killed McCarty, if confession will help me. I went to his rooms about six o'clock and touched everything with gloves so I would leave no prints behind. When the job was done I put the cartridges from my own gun into McCarty's, and closed his fingers around the butt of his gun and around the telephone to make it look as if he had killed himself. I was sure that McCarty wouldn't be found for an hour at least. I left his rooms at a quarter after six and went to see Rose and tell her to call the station at seven o'clock and imitate McCarty's voice. It was six-twenty when I left for Dew Drop Inn. My presence there was to be my alibi. If the police thought McCarty was murdered at seven, I figured they couldn't suspect me when I was fifteen miles away at the time. It sounded like an iron-clad alibi to me, but as Rose squealed, I haven't got a change."

Luecke snapped a pair of handcuffs over Ridder's wrists.

"Rose didn't squeal, Ridder. I only tried that bluff to make you come across."

Ridder's face flamed with surprise and rage. Then he grinned.

"Good God," he said. "What a damn fool I've been."

Greeman had to ask Luecke some questions on the way back.

"You worked a bluff on Ridder, but how in thunder did you know those facts?"

"McCarty's watch gave Ridder away. The police thought that it had simply run down and stopped. When I opened the case I saw that the escapement was loose. Only a violent shock or jar could do that, and I was convinced that it had been broken when McCarty fell, after he had been shot. The time the watch stopped, six-fifteen, fixed in my mind the time of McCarty's murder. But that did not explain the phone message at seven o'clock, in McCarty's voice. I suspected that the message was a fake. Rose Coughlin's admission that she had seen Ridder at six-twenty convinced me that she had phoned the fake message. In this business you always want to watch the little things, Greeman."

Mixed Trails

By FREEMAN HARRISON

A WEIRD feeling came over me as I walked across-town New York with Tom Tice late that summer night. In the light of what happened I almost believe in premonitions.

My friend Jim, the police reporter who had aided the Metropolitan force to solve many a baffling mystery, was elucidating his favorite theory that truth is stranger than fiction. As we sauntered westward on one of the upper Forties—the time was after two—my friend told me of Underworld characters known to have habits oddly inconsistent with their otherwise hard natures. He mentioned "Violet" Mazzola, who never emerged of a night to pursue his favorite vocation of safe-cracking without a liberal sprinkling of violet cologne; Pete Huntley, The Candy Thief, who would snatch precious seconds after committing a crime to eat sweets if any were near, and other law-breakers with habits strange and compelling. These queer revelations interested me. I was editor of a weekly devoted to society gossip.

As we crossed Sixth Avenue, and came into a section of small hotels and gloomy old stone houses, Jim suddenly stood stock-still.

"Did you hear anything just now, Dawson?" he asked.

I had heard nothing and said so, after I had stopped at his side. Jim stood there for probably half a minute and then walked on slowly.

After a few steps we were passing a small hotel which had a bad reputation. Suddenly I heard something beyond all doubt—two things, to be exact. Nearly at our feet a tiny, yellowish object hit the sidewalk, causing a metallic sound. Almost at the same instant, and from somewhere above, there came a brief, muffled cry of terror, which, despite the heat of the night, sent cold shivers down my body. It was the cry of a woman.

I saw Jim pick up and put into his pocket the small object, which was flat and probably four inches long. Then, spurred on by his news-hunting instinct and a natural love of dangerous adventure, he turned to enter The Wynborough, as the hotel was named.

"For God's sake," I cried, "don't go into that place! This is probably a sordid affair between a man and a woman, and you may get shot dead as thanks for your help."

Giving my remonstrance no heed, Jim walked briskly into the front of the lobby. Despite my better judgment I followed, as I was very fond of my little, clean-cut friend. I did not intend to let him face danger alone.

The lobby, faced with yellow marble, was deserted save for a sleepy clerk behind the desk. We well know the strategy of his ilk in concealing trouble, but we felt sure that the chubby functionary was unaware of anything amiss. Probably thinking us friends of some guest giving a late party, he ignored our presence as Jim stepped to the elevator shaft and nonchalantly pushed the bell-button.

"That scream came from an upper floor," he said in a low voice.

When a tired African youth, resplendent in red livery, brought his car from the basement, Jim ordered: "Fifth floor, Sammy." Soon we were walking softly through the hall, which had a right-angled turn or two. My friend kept his right hand in a coat pocket, upon a revolver which he carried by grace of the police.

After a few minutes of fruitless listen-

ing, we ran upstairs to the next floor. As we gained the top we nearly collided with a scantily attired woman, who screamed the word murder into our faces. She mentioned Room No. 7 and pointed toward the front of the hallway.

"Billie Draper has been robbed and murdered," she cried hysterically, as we ran in the direction she indicated.

As we entered Room No. 67, the door of which we found ajar, Jim Tice grew suddenly pale. On the lace-fringed linen cover of a brass bed lay the body of a young woman. Fully dressed, she lay on her side, with her face, beautiful despite the on-creeping death pallor, turned toward us. Her dark auburn hair and the cover beneath were stained.

Jim began searching closets, bath and all other places where one might hide; but he found no lurking criminal. He asked me to ring up the clerk, tell him what had happened, and remind him to call Police Headquarters before he did anything else.

While I was using the wall phone, Jim went over to the figure on the bed and felt of the hands and head.

"She's been dead about ten minutes," he remarked, as I finished talking to the astonished clerk. "She was killed, I think, by two tremendous blows with a blunt instrument."

The room had been ransacked—pulled-out bureau and desk drawers, broken jewel boxes and a rifled small trunk were on the Turkish rug. There were no signs that the victim had made a fight for her life.

While Jim examined the various objects in the room, looking, I supposed, for a clew, the woman who had given the alarm explained that she was Gladys Loree, a friend of Miss Draper.

"I have a room just across the hall," she said, keeping her eyes averted from the brass bed with its still burden. "A little while ago I heard a queer noise in Billie's room. I didn't think much was the matter, but I decided to take a look in here. The door was unlocked."

"Just what kind of a noise did you hear, Miss Loree?" Jim asked.

"It was sort of a low moan, and made me think that perhaps Billie was ill."

"How soon after did you come into this room?"

"Probably three minutes. I took time to partly dress, as you see me now." A faint blush came to the face of the woman, who was in her early thirties and of some charm.

"Did you hear any further noise?" Any one walking in the hall?"

"Not a sound," she replied.

Just then the clerk rushed into the room, accompanied by two uniformed policemen whom, it developed, he had obtained by blowing a whistle.

"Billie Draper!" he gasped. "She's been robbed of her jewels—she had thousands of dollars' worth. And yet that's strange," he continued, as he looked more closely at the slender figure on the bed, "who ever robbed her didn't take her biggest diamond." The clerk pointed to a ring on a finger of the girl's left hand. The sparkling stone must have been of at least three carats.

The two officers, who pending the arrival of a superior from Headquarters had taken charge of the room, seemed impressed by the incongruity of the ring being there, but they made no comment. As for Jim, he nodded and said:

"I noticed that stone when I came in."

Things took a sudden turn when one of the policemen asked Jim and me how we happened so promptly upon the scene. I feared that we might be in an unenviable position for a short time at least, but my friend's brief explanation, largely corroborated by Gladys Loree, set us right.

A squad of detectives soon arrived from Headquarters. The Inspector, a brisk, black-mustached man named Lemarie, greeted Jim with a friendly "Hello, Tice." Then he ordered the detectives, who had been re-enforced by a squad of wardmen which had arrived from the precinct station, to surround and search the hotel.

"Don't let any one leave this building," he commanded.

From the clerk and Miss Loree some information about Billie Draper was obtained. She had been known as an artists' model.

The clerk, whose name was Merkle, said that she had lived at The Wynborough for about a year and had given the management no trouble. She always appeared to have plenty of money, wearing stylish clothes, expensive jewelry and paying her hotel bills promptly.

Miss Loree, though still hysterical, was able to give some pretty definite information about Billie Draper's jewels. She mentioned particularly three diamond rings, set in platinum; a gold watch ring, the miniature timepiece set with diamond chips; a platinum watch and the ring still on the young woman's finger.

"Do you know of any reason," Inspector Lemarie asked, "why any one who may have robbed Miss Draper might have left this ring behind?"

Gladys Loree hesitated for a moment, and there was something indefinite in her manner that caused me to believe that she wished to conceal some fact. But her answer was given in a straightforward way.

"I don't know of any reason whatever," she said.

Jim gave Lemarie a hasty explanation of how we happened to learn of the tragedy. When he had finished, I saw him hand the Inspector the yellowish piece of tin he had picked up from the sidewalk. It was the broken-off half of a pair of tongs such as come in boxes of candy.

Lemarie paused to look at the small object, which he didn't take from Jim's hand.

"You keep it for the present," the Inspector said. "I see what you mean, but I think you're on the wrong track this time, Tice. This may have fallen from another room. There's a sweetie concerned, all right, but not sweets. Of course, if you're right, the fingerprints will show it—I'm going to send some of these bureau-drawer handles and the jewel boxes down to be photographed, and, naturally, we've got Pete Huntley's fingerprints, which we can compare with what comes out. But I think you're wrong, Tice. It's a funny thief who would leave the biggest diamond behind. Even you reporters ought to see that."

Jim started to say something further, but Lemarie impatiently pushed by him and started to question the clerk about Billie Draper's male friends.

Merkle said that a young man, apparently of a wealthy family and only known to him as Castle, was the most constant of the girl's admirers. He had called frequently; in fact, he had come to the hotel about ten o'clock that night, learned from the switchboard operator that Miss Draper was in, and then had taken an elevator. Merkle did not recall seeing him leave.

"Why didn't you tell me this before?" Lemarie snapped.

"Because it didn't occur to me that Castle's coming here had anything to do with Miss Draper's death."

"Your desk isn't far from the elevators," the Inspector said. "If Castle, as you call him, had come down wouldn't you have seen him?"

"It's likely, but, of course, not certain. I was quite busy up to one o'clock, and so I didn't notice every one who came in or went out."

"Anyway, you saw Miss Draper's caller when he entered. Did yon notice anything peculiar about his bearing?"

"Yes," Merkle answered slowly; "I noticed that he seemed a bit nervous, as if he was worried about something."

"Did you notice anything else unusual?" Lemarie quickly followed up.

"Well, yes, there was something, but I didn't think much about it. Castle carried a small box neatly wrapped in white paper."

The Inspector quickly sent for the elevator boy. When the dusky pilot arrived and was questioned, he said he had taken "Mistah Castle" to the sixth floor that night. He also had noticed that the caller seemed nervous and that he carried a small, carefully wrapped box.

The African, who shrank from the sight of what lay on the bed, said that he had not taken the model's admirer down on the elevator. But he obligingly pointed out that his not having done so did not prove that Castle hadn't left. Two cars had been in use till one o'clock, and, besides, guests often walked down the stairs. It developed that the operator of the other car long since had started for his home in Harlem.

After Lemarie had dismissed the lad, with a warning not to leave the hotel, he vigorously questioned Gladys Loree. The woman stated that she knew Mr. Castle, but had not seen him that night. She left the hotel early in the evening and, having visited a late cabaret, did not return till about one-thirty. Neither had she seen Billie Draper—until she found her dead. Merkle confirmed Miss Loree's statement as to her departure and return to The Wynborough.

A search of the hotel had been completed. The only result was a strengthening of the belief that the murderer had made a successful get-away, probably by quietly descending the stairs and slipping out through a rear exit.

Suddenly a detective, who had been rummaging about near a small writing-desk, exclaimed: "Look at this, Inspector!" The man held up a folded sheet of letter-paper, with writing on it. "It lay on her desk."

Lemarie gazed eagerly at the words. Then he handed the letter to Jim, saying:

"Read it, Tice. Then you'll see how much our friend Pete, The Candy Thief, had to do with this affair."

The letter, which from the mailing date must have been received by the model only a few hours before her death, read in part as follows:

"You know, Billie, that I've always gratified your every whim—never denied you anything which I had the money to buy. Won't you return my letters? You know how important it is for me to have them, not because I distrust you, but because some one else might eventually obtain them. The thought of such a contingency is driving me nearly insane."

The letter, written in evident distraction, was signed "Jack."

Lemarie had turned toward the clerk.

"You said that the caller's name was Castle. Did you ever hear him addressed as Castleton?"

"No," Merkle answered haltingly; "but when I come to think of it I do remember hearing Miss Draper call him Jack."

Then the Inspector asked Merkle to describe the young man's appearance. The desperate youth who had written the letter was no other than Jack Castleton, a young blade-about-town who, since graduating from college, had caused his wealthy parents no end of trouble by his capers in the white-light district. It had been rumored that he was to be married, and his wild escapades apparently had ceased.

No other letters in the same handwriting could be found in the room, and the police now seemed sure of their course. Lemarie, after placing a subordinate in charge, turned to leave. He had picked out certain of his own detectives to go with him. On the street a car was waiting.

"Why should Jack Castleton have taken the jewels?" Jim asked the Inspector.

"As a blind," the Inspector shot back as he hurried through the doorway, "to throw us off."

"We'll be going, too," said Jim. "We will take a little ride ourselves, but not up to Jack Castleton's."

I was glad to quit the room. The medical examiner and one of his deputies arrived and were at their grewsome duties.

After reaching the sidewalk, over which hung the gray murkiness of early dawn, Jim led me at a stiff pace toward Sixth Avenue. On that well-known thoroughfare he darted into an all-night restaurant and entered a telephone booth.

In a few minutes he came out and hailed a speeding taxi. We jumped in, Jim shouted an address which I recognized as one on the lower East Side, and in a flash we were traveling southward.

"Well, I guess young Castleton will get his deserts," I remarked after a long silence.

"Perhaps," Jim said laconically, and then asked: "Don't some things about this Castleton business seem queer to you?"

I confessed that two phases perplexed me: If Castleton intended to visit Miss Draper that evening why had he written to her so shortly before? And why did he attach so great importance to letters he had written as an unmarried man?

"Your first point is poorly taken," said my friend. "It would have been natural for Castleton at any time to decide to visit the girl and bring the matter to a climax. But you're right in the second observation.

Although he may have written the Draper girl some letters after his engagement, and she may have threatened a breach-of-promise suit, it isn't sensible to think that he would have committed murder to obtain his love missives. And why, if he killed her, did he leave behind the letter which was almost sure to point him out as the murderer? Jack Castleton isn't a fool."

Jim took the small candy tong from his pocket.

"This is evidence of a grim, useless struggle," he went on. "I think the intruder, having, as he thought, killed the girl because she tried to shout a warning, delayed his departure because he saw a box of candy. Pausing to eat the sweets, he suddenly noticed that his victim was still alive. With the tong in his hand, he rushed to the bed, thinking to silence forever the defenseless girl. She, delirious and frantic, grasped the one thing she saw that looked like a weapon—the glistening yellow tongs, which she probably mistook for something more formidable. Her assailant snatched the tongs away, but in the brief struggle they were broken in two, and one part was hurled through the low open window near by. After placing the other tong in his pocket, the man delivered the last blow, causing the brief cry we heard."

"How do you know there was a box of candy in the room?" I asked. "And if there was, what became of it?"

"You know," Jim answered, "that both Merkle and the elevator boy agreed that Castleton carried a small package wrapped in white paper. Well, it must have been just a box of candy, Dawson. I know Billie Draper had a sweet tooth, and Castleton, who, as he himself wrote, had always gratified her every whim, did not neglect, despite the impending break, a little piece of courtesy.

"There was no trace of box, contents or wrapping," Jim continued. "I believe the murderer took them with him to finish the sweets which meant almost as much to him as the jewels he stole. Pete Huntley was the man. He is known as The Candy Thief."

"Huntley!" I exclaimed. "The Candy Thief! Why, that can't be. He wouldn't have left the biggest diamond."

"It's only a superb rhinestone, Dawson; the best I've ever seen. So good that it fooled even Lemarie, who doubtless considered the possibility that the gem might be false. Gladys Loree knew it was a fake, but out of deference to her friend she said nothing."

I gasped and managed to ask:

"But why did Billie Draper have an imitation diamond?"

"Vanity," Jim answered. "She had much money, but not enough to buy as large a diamond as she wished to flash. The big rhinestone was the result."

"Your opinion about Huntley's being guilty is only a theory," I said.

"That's all, Dawson; but I'm so sure it's right that I phoned Headquarters from the lunchroom that I had the murderer of Billie Draper practically caught, but would require assistance. When I mentioned Huntley's name to Inspector MacCharles, whom I know, he showed lots of interest, because the police haven't been able to prove anything against The Candy Thief since he left Sing Sing a year ago, although they are certain he's been mixed up in several bold robberies of the last month.

"MacCharles," Jim went on, "wanted me to wait for a comparison of Huntley's fingerprints with those on objects from the girl's room, and only gave in when I reminded him that Pete might have been using gloves on this job. The Inspector promised to send some men to Lichtenstein's drug store, which is near Huntley's home. Hello, here we are now."

We had reached a dingy part of the Metropolis, not far from the turgid waters of the East River. In front of Lichtenstein's drug store I saw an automobile with several men seated in it. They were, of course, officers from Headquarters.

After dismissing the taxi, Jim talked for a few minutes with a detective lieutenant named Cantrall, who commanded the squad. He had a search warrant, with a technical charge of vagrancy against Huntley.

Soon we were walking toward his abode, which was a block nearer the river. The

detectives kept apart from each other, but I walked near Jim, and when at last he pointed through the haze of dawn to a shuttered frame house across the foul street and whispered "There it is," I felt suddenly cold. The two-story house was murky, desolate, decaying.

I was not convinced that Huntley had murdered Billie Draper, but I knew that he was a desperate man and I could see no reason why I, unarmed, should risk my life tracking him in his lair. So I stayed outside, as did two detectives, ready for action in case the criminal should attempt escape by window or rear door.

In the meantime Jim, Cantrall and the others had crashed in the old door and rushed into the dark hallway. Then I could see them open a door to the left, run into a dimly lighted room and pounce upon a gigantic, sullen man who drew his pistol.

Jim dashed the weapon from his hand, but the inmate of the room was full of fight, and ignored the revolvers brandished at him. Powerful and with the agility of a tiger, he battled furiously with his fists, all the while trying to gain the doorway. But he was soon handcuffed, and by that time the two detectives and I had reached the grimy room. A great number of candy boxes were scattered on the floor.

"Tell me what it's all about," the prisoner growled.

"You're wanted for the murder of Billie Draper in The Wynborough," said Cantrall.

"I ain't been out of the house tonight," The Candy Thief mumbled, looking at the dirty, carpetless floor.

"You murdered her in cold blood, Huntley." Jim was speaking in a piercing tone. "You murdered her because she started to cry for help. Don't deny your guilt. We know you did it."

At Jim's request a detective began to search Huntley, and the officer soon took from the prisoner's coat a flat, broken-off piece of gilded tin, that glistened in the sickening light from a gas-jet. Huntley struggled vainly to get free.

Jim took the tiny tong he had picked up on the sidewalk and placed its broken end against the broken end of the object the detective had found on Pete Huntley. The result was a perfect pair of candy tongs.

"You thought you had got away clean," Jim shot at the prisoner, "so you didn't bother to get rid of the half of those tongs. The girl hurled the part I found through the window. It matches the half you had in your pocket, and it's going to convict you."

If I had not been thinking of the slain girl uptown I would have felt, perhaps, a slight degree of pity for the wretch cowering on the floor, with the grim, awful Death House not many weeks away. Later, in the Tombs, they made him confess that he killed the model with a blackjack and escaped by way of the stairs and a rear exit.

Billie Draper's jewels could not be found in the room, but in a few days they were recovered from pawnbrokers and were claimed by the dead girl's parents.

DEFRAUDED BANKS

FOUR of the five men who were indicted recently for swindling banks out of $50,000 by cashing forged checks pleaded guilty before Judge Mancuso. They were sentenced August 25.

The men were Samuel Stern, Abraham Stander, Emanuel Lippman and Milton Silverman. The fifth defendant, Jack Waxman, of Cincinnati, denied that he was guilty and will be tried.

According to James G. Wallace, Assistant District Attorney, Silverman, a collector for the Dairyman's League, retained customers' checks for forty-eight hours to enable Stern to copy signatures. Stern forged the checks and gave them to young women employed as stenographers to cash. The men hired several offices for short periods in various part of the city in order to complete their defrauding.

Button! Button!

By PAUL ELLSWORTH TRIEM

CHAPTER ONE

"JAMES DOODY, Confidential Agent," read the card in Wellington McCracken's aristocratic hand. The great man twisted the slip of pasteboard this way and that. Then he raised his turbid blue eyes and stared unwinkingly at one of the two men before him: a chubby, pink-faced little person of thirty-five or so, who held upon his right knee a "plug" hat of unusual proportions.

"Mr.—er—Doody," McCracken began, "you have been highly recommended to me by a friend and business associate—a man in whose judgment I usually trust implicitly. The matter upon which I wish to consult you is so important, however, that I desire to give you a chance to withdraw. If you feel any misgivings, Mr.—er—Doody, don't hesitate to——"

Wellington McCracken paused abruptly, his head lifted. A strange voice had come to him—not from the flabby lips of Mr. Doody, whose face never so much as twitched or flickered, but from the great hat perched upon the confidential agent's right knee.

"Spill it, commander; Discretion is my middle name, and my godfather was old man Keep-Mum! There's a week-end party goin' on here? This is a society case? No notoriety? Say, just you tell your Uncle Jimmy about it!"

Mr. McCracken gasped, and the little islands of hard, red cheek which showed between the billows of his whisker turned purple. To be spoken to in this disrespectful tone by a man was bad enough, but to have a derby hat take such liberties was unthinkable.

However, he was in no position to quibble; and the voice, whatever its source, had been vibrant with confidence.

"Really, sir," he replied, "I hardly know whether to take you into my confidence or not. Your manner is somewhat remarkable. Lord Carthwait, what would you advise?"

The third occupant of the little study, thus appealed to, unfolded his long legs and stretched himself back luxuriously in his chair. He blew out a cloud of cigarette smoke and allowed his humorous blue eyes to rest appraisingly on the derby hat on Mr. Doody's knee.

"Be a sport, Mac!" he advised. "Better tell him all about it!"

Lord Carthwait's manner was enthusiastic, but it was obvious that the novelty of the situation, rather than any real promise of help it might hold, had appealed to him. He seemed even a little contemptuous of the unimpressive little Mr. Doody as he sat watching that chubby individual.

Wellington McCracken shook his head irritably, still eyeing the derby hat on Doody's knee as if he expected it to break into song or dance a jig.

"I hardly know," he muttered. Then his turbid eyes blinked, and he nodded. "I'll take a chance, as my young friend advises. Here is the problem in a nutshell, Mr.—er—Doody: There have been a number of burglaries, or robberies, or whatever the technical name is, in this vicinity in the last six weeks. All of them have been in the houses of my—er—social equals, if you grasp my meaning—the houses of people who have wealth and culture and all that sort of thing. We are rather a select little colony out here, you have, perhaps, learned. Now, I am holding a house party over the week-end, and it occurred to me—on the

suggestion of Lord Carthwait—to try to backfire against this scandalous person. Instead of waiting till the horse is stolen we want to have you on the ground to apprehend the horse-thief. Do I make my meaning clear?"

"I've got a cat that could understand the whole layout," Mr. Doody's derby replied contemptuously. Now, let's get down to cases. You say there have been *other* robberies; how many, and where?"

Mr. McCracken drew a memorandum from a vest-pocket.

"The first robbery occurred about the middle of November. The Stanley Webbers were giving a party, and during the evening three valuable necklaces were stolen from the necks of their owners. The loss wasn't discovered till late, and then only by accident. Nothing but the finest strings were taken."

Mr. Doody nodded, his little round, brown eyes blinking sleepily.

"Sure, sure; go on," the derby hat commanded. "I got all that."

Wellington McCracken let his forefinger travel down the page of his notebook.

"The house of Henry McGrew was visited on the thirteenth of the same month. There was a ball, and some time during the evening the thief helped himself to half a dozen valuable paintings. The art gallery is on the second floor. I think it was never discovered how the rascal entered and left the house."

"Reg'lar second-story stuff," mumbled Mr. Doody's hat. "All right, commander."

Mr. McCracken trailed on through his notebook, giving the details of three other thefts. Then he turned upon Lord Carthwait, who sat with his clean-cut Nordic profile turned toward the ceiling, blowing rings of smoke.

"And that brings us up to the time of your recent adventure, my lord," he concluded. "Suppose you tell—er—Mr. Doody about that?"

The young nobleman pulled himself briskly upright and tossed his cigarette into the fireplace.

"Glad to accommodate," said he. "Of course the joke is on me—and Draper—but I can stand it. I intend to have my revenge."

He paused for a moment, looking sharply out of a pair of remarkably keen blue eyes at the stubby figure and baby face of the confidential agent. Mr. Doody continued to hold his big derby hat on his knee, as if it were a sort of metaphysical bushel basket for the accumulation of facts.

"Mac, here, has told you about the Caughlins' New Year's ball, and how this brainy bird relieved a lady (who prefers to remain nameless) of her jewelry. The trick seems to have been done, in this instance, by abstracting her reticule and substituting another, very similar to it. In the Draper episode, which I had the honor to investigate at first hand, the method was different. Probably our friend Mr. Doody has never heard of my modest little reputation in England and on the continent, where I am regarded by some people as a veritable phenomenon in the detection of criminals. I have made something of a study of the psychology of the criminal mind——"

"And about this Draper mixup, you know," chimed in Mr. Doody's hat.

Lord Carthwait reddened, but grinned good-humoredly.

"Right-o, old top! Brisk it is!" Well, I placed myself at the disposal of Mr. Draper, and he showed me over the house and gave me a guest-room commanding the situation —or so we believed. The night of the festivity arrived. The evening passed pleasantly, and I went to my room, pottered about for a while and turned out my light. Then I sat down and waited. Soon the house was quiet."

Lord Carthwait paused to light a fresh cigarette, at whose glowing end he looked thoughtfully. Then with a deprecatory smile he was again speaking:

"I fully intended to stay awake, and I started out well. Then I must have dozed. I woke with the impression that there had been some sort of stealthy noise in the house below me—my room was on the second floor. I went quietly into the hall and looked about. Nothing out of the ordinary was to be seen, so I went downstairs and into the reception-hall, which was immedi-

ately below my room. It occurred to me that the sound which had awakened me might have come from there—and I was correct; a window had been forced, but for some reason the alarm had failed to function. I awoke my host and we returned to the open window, which we examined carefully. There were no fingerprints, Mr. Doody, but it was evident that an angle-jimmy had been used. The middle catch of the window, a heavy bronze affair, had been snapped.

"Well, there we were. Some one had attempted to enter the house, but had he really succeeded in doing so? It occurred to Mr. Draper that we ought to look at his wife's jewel-case, which was in a wall-safe in her dressing-room. He opened the safe. The jewels, which were of considerable value, were untouched. We were naturally delighted, and went down to his den and had a little drink in honor of the occasion. We had out-played the enemy, brainy though he had previously showed himself. Then, just to make sure, we secured the broken window and went over the house, from basement to attic, as thoroughly as it was possible to do it without alarming the other guests. We found no trace of any one having entered the place.

"And right there is where we made our mistake: we assumed that after having been almost caught in the act of entering, our antagonist would be glad enough to get away. The psychology of the affair is simple enough. We went to bed and slept soundly till morning."

Lord Carthwait paused to eye his companions deliberately. His manner was still casual, but two daubs of heightened color had come into his cheeks and his blue eyes sparkled angrily. Then he concluded in a matter-of-fact tone which could not hide his chagrin:

"In the morning Mrs. Draper went to the safe to examine her jewels and to assure herself of their safety. They were gone, and with them had disappeared five thousand dollars in currency left in the same depository by Mr. Draper. The thief not only had not been frightened away for the night by our investigation, *he had hidden near enough to the safe so that he could watch Mr. Draper unlock it.* Afterward he had helped himself and departed. That's the sort of crook we're lined up against tonight, Mr. Doody. But if you'll excuse me for boasting, I want to say that on this occasion I shall give him a run for his money."

Mr. Doody shifted his derby from his right knee to his left, as if the load of information accumulating in it was making it heavy. Then, without moving face or lips, he asked a question:

"How did this duck get out?"

"Probably through the front door, which was fastened with a night-lock."

Mr. Doody nodded his round head musingly.

"Sure, sure! And there were no fingerprints, you say? Sure you'd know a fingerprint if you saw one?"

Lord Carthwait grinned and reached into a vest pocket. From it he took a linen tester. Then from other pockets in rapid succession he produced a bottle of aluminum powder and one of powdered carbon, a camel's-hair brush, a steel tape, and an electric flashlight.

"My tools," he explained; "and I know how to use them. I have a fingerprint camera in my bag—but there weren't any prints."

Wellington McCracken added his confirmation to this statement.

"If Lord Carthwait says there were no prints, there *were* no prints," said he. "And now, Mr. Doody, what is your plan for handling this business?"

The confidential agent looked into his hat. Ponderingly he shook his head.

"He's a clever duck, and we've got to handle him carefully," he confided. "You'll notice one thing, gentlemen: *he doesn't stick to one* line—that's where he shows brains. A low-brow crook does the same set of tricks every time, like a rabbit making his circle in the same direction; and pretty quick you learn where to expect him, and you get there before he does. But this bird is clever. Now suppose you tell me what's on for tonight? Dance, bridge, or what?"

"Nothing formal. A little dancing and some music and other little things."

"Sure, sure! And the house will quiet

down about midnight? Then our program divides itself into two parts: up to midnight and after. For the first, Lord Carthwait will have the run of everything, and it's him that'll have to shoulder most of the load.

"But after midnight I'll get onto the job in earnest. And now, Mr. Wellington McCracken, I'll ask you just to trot me around this palatial residence of yours and show me your false alarm system, and where your guests are quartered. I want to get a sort of bird's-eye plan into my noodle."

CHAPTER TWO

SEATED in a little fern and flower-filled alcove off the ball-room, Mr. Doody divided his attention between his over-sized derby, which he had placed on a small table at his side, and the dancers. There were forty or fifty of these; for in addition to the house guests, a number of neighbors had come in for the evening.

"And a spiffy bunch of dames and gents they are!" the confidential agent told his hat. He moved his lips freely enough, now that he was by himself, as if he considered that his ventriloquial effects ought to be saved for a larger audience. "Now there is Mrs. McCracken—rope of graded Oriental pearls, worth sixty grand if they're worth a cent. And old Mrs. Phillips—look at that bar-pin and that pendant! Wouldn't mind having a crack at these cuckoos myself, if I was a gun!"

Occasionally Lord Carthwait passed Mr. Doody's alcove and threw him a look of understanding. The young nobleman was well above six feet in height, so that even when he was at the farther side of the ball-room his blond head was visible to the confidential agent. Mr. Doody followed its girations with respectful attention.

"What's this they say—'blood will tell?'" he questioned himself. "Doody, my son, there's something in it. And he's on his tiptoes tonight. I expect he'd get a great kick out of landing his man right under my nose. Well, I get paid by the day."

With which comforting reflection the little man lifted his hat tenderly from the table and placed it on his knees, bottom side up, like a galvanized washtub.

The dancing was interspersed with other forms of entertainment. Mr. Doody listened to the singing, and afterward respectfully watched a sleight-of-hand exhibition by Lord Carthwait. This diversion came to an end when the young nobleman took a flask of frosted silver out of the ear of Wellington McCracken.

"Sure, sure!" Mr. Doody mumbled philosophically. "It's him that'll land the crook all right, if any one does."

CHAPTER THREE

JAMES DOODY, confidential agent, started upright in his chair. In his darkened chamber on the second floor of the McCracken mansion he had set himself to keep winkless vigil. But he must have dozed. What had aroused him? A stealthy footstep outside his door?

Next moment he was on his feet, his hat under his arm, his hand on the doorknob. He was in the hall—the sudden clamor of the alarm bell echoed through the dimly lighted corridor.

"What woke me up must have been him fooling at the window," Mr. Doody told himself. "Now he's set off the alarm."

A swiftly moving figure turned an angle of the hall. Doody's automatic was thrust out before him.

"Hands up, or I'll plug you!" he cried.

"It's me—Lord Carthwait!" the figure replied. "Where the deuce is the light switch? I got a glimpse of some one running—if we could find the light——"

Mr. Doody could see Carthwait fumbling about over the face of a side wall. From the obscurity a third figure joined them, crossed to where the young nobleman was searching, and next moment the hall was flooded with white light. Wellington McCracken in quilted dressing-gown and Turkish slippers, had manipulated the switch.

"What happened?" the master of the house demanded. "I heard the bell."

"Oh, some one got in, all right!" snapped

Lord Carthwait. He was standing with a flashlight in one hand and a big Webley revolver in the other, staring up and down the hall. "Come on—he ran toward the end there, and went around into the side hall. I should have taken a shot at the blighter."

McCracken shuffled off down the hall, with Lord Carthwait at his heels. Mr. Doody, a pucker of bewilderment on his pudgy face, followed after. His manner was that of a man who has just received a jet of cold water in the face.

Around the turn they went, and again Wellington McCracken found and manipulated a light switch. Then he sputtered and pointed. An open window showed before them, its middle catch twisted awry.

"By George, he must have come up the drain-pipe!" said Lord Carthwait, his eager face thrust for a moment into the outer darkness. "When I first caught sight of him he was coming out of a room—*your wife's room,* Mac. I'd forgotten. Come on."

Wellington McCracken was surprisingly quick on his feet for so bulky and dignified a man. He made the return journey into the main hall and along it at a stiff sprint, and drew up, panting and purple, outside a closed door.

"You're sure it was this one he came out of?"

"I'm sure he did! Sorry, Mac; better see if the lady is all right."

Wellington McCracken knocked and disappeared into his wife's room. The murmur of voices sounded for a moment, then the door opened again and McCracken commanded his two companions to enter. His turbid eyes were bulging.

"She didn't see or hear anything!" he commented, indicating a lady seated on the edge of a tumbled bed. Mrs. McCracken had donned a kimono and slippers, Mr. Doody noticed. Her lip was trembling, and she stared from one of the intruders to the other.

James Doody asked a stolid question:

"Who unlocked the door just now?"

"My wife."

"Was the key left in the lock?"

"Certainly—just as it is now."

"Could you see if he used a pair of nippers to turn the key with?" Doody asked next, turning to Lord Carthwait.

"I couldn't see—the hall was too dark. But look here, we're overlooking the real crux of the situation. What we want to know, you know, is whether this person got anything. How about it, Mrs. McCracken? Have you looked?"

The woman on the bed arose with a sudden tensing of face and shoulders. Crossing to a dresser, she knelt beside it.

James Doody, confidential agent, had been staring blinkingly about the spacious bedroom. He noted the heavy tapestry hangings and the fireplace, from which a wisp of gray smoke ascended into the cone of the chimney. He studied the window, which was partly open. He even crossed to it and glanced down into the pit of darkness outside. Then very faintly he shook his head and peered into his big hat, as if hoping to find a new-laid idea there. Disappointed in this, he turned his frog-like eyes upon the kneeling figure beside the dresser; Mrs. McCracken had just opened a secret panel and had taken from it a leather-covered case. This she unfastened with trembling fingers. Then she stood up, crying and laughing in the same breath.

"They're here!" she cried. "Oh, Lord Carthwait, I'm so thankful to you—I'm sure it was you that saved them!"

She beamed up at the tall, blond youth, who smiled gaily down at her. But in the same moment the smile was stricken from Lord Carthwait's face, and an expression of dismay took its place.

"Oh, I say!" he cried, staring at the pearls in the hand of his hostess, "I thought it was your necklace of graded Orientals we were talking about. There, you know——"

He took the necklace into his own strong, steady fingers. For an instant he turned, holding them directly under the drop-light beside the dresser.

When he again faced the little company the last traces of his recent smile were gone..

"I see!" he commented, staring coldly at Wellington McCracken. "You substituted these—*these rather poor imitations!* And you may call that cricket—to keep two gentlemen on guard all night for a sham!"

The master of the house found his tongue.

"Imitation! Sham!" he cried. "You mean—let me see those pearls."

He took them into his trembling fingers and turned to the drop-light. When he whirled back, his arms were sagging at his sides. The string of pearls dropped with a little click to the floor.

"He outplayed us—he outplayed *you!*" he shrieked, whirling on Mr. Doody. "He *was* here, after all. And he left these, to fool us till daylight——"

Lord Carthwait took the affair in hand at this point. His face had cleared of its storm cloud, and he smiled cheerily as he laid down his flashlight and revolver.

"Only one thing to do," he announced. "Both Doody and I were here at the critical moment, and some carping person might say that we somehow bedeviled the necklace. We must be searched, both of us. And my friend Mac shall do it."

He led the way toward the bathroom, the protesting master of the establishment following at his heels.

James Doody, the confidential agent, stood where he had first taken his place near the hall door. His hat was firmly grasped under his right elbow, but presently he took it out and looked helplessly into it.

Then his expression cleared with startling suddenness. He blinked and gulped and popped his hat back under his arm. For an instant he stared at the huddled figure of Mrs. McCracken, seated on the edge of the tumbled bed. Next moment he had crossed over to the dresser and was peering intently down at his recent associate's tools.

"He couldn't find the light switch," whispered Mr. Doody, without moving his lips.

CHAPTER FOUR

WELLINGTON McCRACKEN sat in his study, one arm resting on his flat-top desk, the fingers of the other hand energetically twisting a bit of pasteboard. His turbid eyes glared, first at the harmless-looking little man seated in front of him, hat on knees, and then, more leniently, at Lord Carthwait.

"James Doody, Confidential Agent," snorted Mr. McCracken, eyeing the card in his hand belligerently. "Permit me to say, sir, that I regard you as a monumental false alarm. I was impressed with your evident lack of ability in the first moment of our interview, sir. No man can fool me. I read inefficiency in every line of your face."

Mr. Doody looked meekly at his employer, and from him to the derby hat on his own knee.

"Very sorry, sir," the hat said propitiatingly. "But if you don't mind——"

"But I *do* mind. You've bungled everything. And now that Lord Carthwait has been called away——"

Carthwait, thus referred to, glanced at his traveling-bag and light overcoat, placed ready on a chair near the door.

"Sorry to have to leave you in this way," he declared, "but I had a message from New York—a cablegram——"

"Relayed to the local telegraph office," broke in Mr. Doody's hat confidentially. "But it wasn't a cablegram, really, you know. I had a bit of walk myself before breakfast and I found out about that. It was a dummy message. Sure—I know."

The little room was silent with that ominous sort of silence that follows the tolling of a great bell. Wellington McCracken slid forward in his chair, his patches of red cheek showing purple among his whiskers. Lord Carthwait had turned his head abruptly at the first words of the interruption; but now he sat staring with expressionless blue eyes from Mr. Doody to the magnate at the flat-topped desk.

Mr. Doody peered into his hat. Then he turned it toward his two companions, as if it had been the horn of an old-fashioned phonograph.

"And furthermore," announced the derby gruffly, "it ain't necessary to do much more figuring on this little case. Lord Carthwait here told you he'd take up the investigation from the city end, didn't he? Sure, sure—*I know.* I was listening at the keyhole. Can't fool your Uncle Jimmy——"

With a bovine shake of his bewhiskered head, Wellington McCracken burst into heated speech.

"This is an outrage," he cried. "Eavesdropping——"

"You said it," interrupted Mr. Doody's derby. "And that ain't all. I called up the Drapers. 'Member what his nibs here—Carthwait—said about that business? *He said Mr. Draper suggested examining the wall safe.* And I called 'em up this morning, and Mr. Draper was quite positive. It wasn't *him* that suggested looking in the safe—it was the duke here."

Mr. Doody's expression had altered subtly. He permitted the ghost of a sly smile to steal about the corners of his usually expressionless mouth. Then again he was relaying, via his hat. His two auditors seemed struck dumb.

"It was his jiblets that suggested looking in the safe. And why do you suppose he did that, Mr. Wellington McCracken? You can't guess? Well, I'll tell you. He wanted to know where Mrs. Draper kept her jewels, you see, and he hadn't been able to spot the place just by keeping his eyes open. So he did the next best thing; he induced Draper to disclose the hiding place, and also to show him the combination. That was on the pretense of seeing if the safe had been robbed. It hadn't been, but his royal highness came back in an hour or so after his false alarm and turned the trick. He knew the Drapers would be sleeping to beat the band—folks will believe that old stuff about lightning never striking twice in the same spot, you know. And that was how he did that trick. Which brings us up to last night."

Mr. McCracken found his tongue for a horrified instant.

"Lord Carthwait—my dear young friend—this infamous lie——"

But Lord Carthwait had just snapped a match alight with his thumb nail and was coolly applying the spurting flame to his cigarette. His blue eyes rested cryptically on the tiny conflagration.

"Now, don't you go and lose no sleep about your dear young friend here," resumed Mr. Doody's loquacious derby. "Because *I'm* telling you how it all happened. He got the pearls——"

"But I searched him!" shrieked McCracken, laying violent hold on his own snuff-colored whiskers. "I saw for myself——"

"He got the pearls," reiterated the dogmatic voice of the hat. "He didn't know where your wife hid 'em, and he didn't have time to rummage around any. Not only that, but he knew too much to pull two tricks just the same way. Notice how he's varied his stuff: once or twice he was just a plain dip, frisking a young woman while he was dancing with her. Then he pulled some second-story stuff—that was at McGrew's, where he grabbed the pictures. Afterward that neat little bit at Draper's, and he's ready for a real classy job for your benefit. Sleight-of-hand—switch the pearls right under your nose—but what's a little thing like that to a young gent that can take a silver flask out of a man's ear? He——"

"But—I—searched—him!" bellowed Wellington McCracken, beside himself with bewilderment. "I searched him, I tell you. He didn't have any pearls. He couldn't have."

"Sure, sure. But did you stop to think why his nibs insisted on that searching stuff? Him and me weren't suspected—couldn't be at that time. He said he'd seen a man come out of your wife's room, and we found the place where this alleged burglar had got in and out of the house. The marquis here insists on being searched. Why? So that later, if you should get to putting two and two together, he would have an alibi. And there was another funny thing: that window had a burglar-alarm, but it didn't work when the crook come in—not till he was leaving. He——"

With a luxurious sigh, Lord Carthwait stretched himself and stood up. Next instant he had whipped his big Webley re-

volver from under his coat and had covered his two companions.

"Now, gentlemen," said he, "don't do anything foolish. I have been immensely entertained by my worthy colleague's narrative—and I may confess that it has its suggestive points, although it fails to arrive. Undoubtedly the pearls have disappeared. Perhaps I had something to do with it. But where did they go? I was searched, you know, and after all, that's the point. Button, button, who's got the button?

"And with that comforting reflection, I must leave you. I am going straight out the front door, and let me ask you particularly not to follow. If you do——"

He thrust his tongue into his right cheek, make a clucking noise, caught up his bag and coat and departed.

A fizzling noise issued from the lips of Wellington McCracken.

"Up and after him!" he cried, making not the slightest effort to set the example he commended. "The crook—and him a lord."

Mr. Doody hadn't budged from his chair, but the sly smile which had been gathering about the corners of his mouth changed into a full-fledged grin. From the cavernous interior of his derby hat there came a chuckle.

"Him a lord?" he repeated. "If he's a lord, I'm an albino. If I ain't mistaken, and judging from his style of work, he's Jemmy Scott from Lun'on and Paree. Never worked over here before that I know of. And that's one good reason for not following him, you know—you been showing him around a good bit, kind of sponsoring him. And we ain't got a very strong case against him—not one that I'd like to go into court with. He took the pearls, all right, and he done it just like I tell you. I ought to have knowed, when he couldn't find the light——"

Mr. Doody paused and stared hard at his employer.

"Even you ought to have caught him out there—his not being able to find the switch, you know—and fumbling around for it—*when he had a flashlight in his hand*. You don't see why? Really, I'm surprised at you, Mr. Wellington McCracken; the natural thing for him to have done would be to turn on his flash, when he was looking for the switch, wouldn't it? Sure, sure. But he didn't, *because he knew it would be no use*. That lamp of his wouldn't work, and I'll show you why."

James Doody, confidential agent, reached into his coat pocket and drew out a flashlight. He unscrewed the battery end and turned the lamp upright in his hand. Next moment there appeared in a silver shower from it a string of lustrous oriental pearls, at which the little man with the double chin stared admiringly.

"Button, button, who's got the button?" queried Mr. Doody's hat. "Well, his ludship ain't—although he don't know it yet. I traded torches with him while you had him in the bathroom last night."

THIEVES RIP FOUR SAFES

BURGLARS indulged in a safe ripping festival one night in the office of Charles Weiland, Inc., a cutlery and hardware firm. After opening four large safes, the collection was found to amount to only $243 in cash and $231 in jewelry. The damage done totalled nearly $10,000.

The thieves are supposed to have secreted themselves in the building next-door before closing time. They went up over the roof and entered the place through the skylight.

The thugs, finding the night's earnings so small, proceeded to smash the office, breaking the glass doors, throwing records about and opening desks. One of the employees lost a lavalliere that he had presented to his wife on a wedding anniversary nine years ago. He had it locked up the night before for safe keeping.

Reunion

By LAURENCE R. D'ORSAY

J. HORNBROOK STONE, president and chairman of the board of directors of the True Blue Oil Company, president of the Swift-sure Finance Corporation, and various other like speculative companies, sat in the dining-room of his well-appointed residence. He had finished his sumptuous albeit solitary meal, and, reclining in an armchair, sipped his rare port. It was three years, all but a day, since he had parted from his brother Jimmie at the Thirty-third Street Station, and set out with forty-eight cents in his pocket to seek his fortune. In that brief period he had rapidly risen to wealth and distinction. Three years ago he had been a penniless mechanic, forsaken by Fortune and discontented with his lot in life; today he was a rich man, smiled on and courted by Fortune and all her minions—but still discontented with his life.

It was strange that he should cherish this discontent, for J. Hornbrook Stone, mindful of the fact that he was made for something better than manual labor, had matriculated and graduated at the World's University in the Department of Forgery and Theft. He had taken the highest diplomas in fraud; he had passed with honors the test of an accomplished swindler, and in the intricacies of embezzlement he was a Bachelor of Art. And yet he was dissatisfied; but, then, some men are never content.

This evening, as he sat sipping his '18 Oporto, with the daily paper at his elbow, he actually experienced a pang of regret that he had entered the course for such distinction—which he modestly refrained from publishing to the world at large.

In the paper at his side there was a little advertisement which had given his memory a rather unpleasant jar. It was in the Personal column, and ran as follows:

"J. H. S.—Don't forget tomorrow, noon, G. C. Station.—Jimmie.'

He wanted to see Jimmie, for he still loved him after his old fashion; but the memories which the advertisement called up, and a doubt as to whether Jimmie would appreciate his accomplishments, made him fidgety; and the recollection of all that must pass between now and noon tomorrow filled him with uneasiness. For tonight he was to stake everything in one tremendous venture. If he succeeded he would need to do nothing more all his life; if he failed——

His memory went back to that evening all but three years ago, and showed him two men sitting by a small log fire in a poor little house in a wretched New England town, warming their hands at the tiny blaze and silently watching the flicker of the flames. They were both young men; the elder was not more than thirty, and the younger perhaps a year behind.

They were down and out—"broke." There had been a lock-out at the factory at which they were both employed; nor was there much likelihood of their going back to the works, for the owners were rich men who could afford a long struggle, and the men were obstinate; and thus it was that Fortune had forgotten these two young men who sat by their little fire, doggedly silent, too low-hearted even to curse Fortune.

"I'll go to New York, Jimmie," said the elder suddenly, without looking up.

"What'll we do there?" growled the other. Jimmie and John Stone—there wasn't any "Hornbrook" at that time—had been more inseparable than most brothers since the death of their parents, ten years and more ago Therefore it was that, when

the latter announced his intention of going to New York, the former instantly assumed his own share in the venture.

"Don't know till I get there," answered John, not encouraging the first person plural. First person singular was a good deal more in his line. Yet he loved Jimmie —in his own way.

"What's the use of going, then?"

"What's the use of staying in this burg? What's the use of tramping around night and day after a job that never comes? What's the use of *anything?* I am tired of this kind of work, anyway; it isn't what I was made for. I'm going to try for something better. You needn't come."

But because Jimmie was accustomed to be led by his elder brother, he too gave out his intention to try his fortune in New York. This was not what the other wanted.

"Tell you what, Jimmie," he said after a pause. "I've got a plan I want you to help carry out. I want you and me to separate for three years, and try our luck alone. At the end of the three years we'll meet again, and split takings."

And so it was settled. There was to be no communication, and at the exact expiration of the three years they were to meet at twelve o'clock noon at the Grand Central Station in New York.

J. Hornbrook Stone glanced again at the little advertisement in the Personal column, which had given his memory a rather unpleasant jog. He selected another cigar and watched the blue smoke curling to the ceiling.

At eight o'clock tonight the mail train would start from New York with close on to two million dollars' worth of specie and currency for the Federal Reserve Bank. If J. Hornbrook Stone succeeded in his enterprise it would reach its destination with the same weight of lead in the strong iron boxes.

Everything had been nicely and minutely arranged. The lead had been carefully weighed to a quarter of an ounce, and portioned into equal lots to match the cases of specie. A key to fit the cases had been secretly made from a wax impression of the original, how obtained none but Stone knew. This key he would hand to his confederates this evening at the depot, after which he would take the seven o'clock train preceding the mail.

The fireman of the mail train, an old railway hand, had been bribed, together with the guards under whose direct care the specie would travel. It had been thought to deal differently with the head brakeman and engineer; a specially prepared and powerful drug was to be given them in their tobacco just before starting, which would take effect about an hour after administration and last till the sleepers should be aroused. During their slumber the fireman would pull up at a convenient place on the line to allow the robbers to board the train and leave it with their booty. Stone would meet them at an appointed place and manage the rest. The head brakeman and the engineer, awakened just after the robbery, would be glad, for their own sakes, to say nothing about their long slumber.

The arrangements had been made with nicety, and rehearsed twice; and yet Stone was uneasy and nervous as he thought of the risk he ran. Twice he stretched out his hand for telegraph blanks to stay the whole business; once he went so far as to ring the bell, but he changed his mind by the time the servant answered it, and ordered hot brandy instead. It was six o'clock; in another hour he must hand over the duplicate key to his accomplices and board his own train.

"God!" he exclaimed, as he drained the glass and rose to go. "A life like this would kill me! Well, this'll be the last risk. If it turns out right—as it must—I'll quit. I'll have enough then, and to spare, and for Jimmie, too."

And, because he loved Jimmie in his own way, J. Hornbrook Stone smiled as he passed out into the dusk.

The rear brakeman of the seven o'clock train finished his last cup of coffee, put on his thick overcoat, kissed his wife and took up his lantern preparatory to going on duty. He reached the depot as the great engine was being coupled, and gave the engineer a cheery salute, which the latter acknowledged with a surly growl.

"Something's made Tom sore tonight," he said to the fireman.

At the last moment a man in an expensive fur coat, whom several of the travelers on the platform recognized as Mr. J. Hornbrook Stone, hurried up. The Pullman was empty save for himself, and with a sigh of satisfaction he lit a cigar and composed himself to make the best of a tiresome and nerve-racking journey. The conductor gave the signal and the train steamed slowly out of the station, twenty-five minutes late in starting.

Left to his own reflections and lulled by the motion of the train, J. Hornbrook Stone fell into a fitful sleep. He awoke suddenly with a vague sense that the train was traveling at a most unusual and unaccountable speed; and, as he leaped to his feet in a half-dazed fright, they shot through Scranton, where they were timed to make a five-minute stop, and he was conscious of seeing, as in a flash, a crowd of frightened and awe-struck faces looking at the train from the platform. He sank back on the cushioned seat, seized with a nameless terror.

Suddenly, as he sat there with staring eyes, a figure hurried through the Pullman towards the front of the train; a stern-set face, as of one going to certain danger and needing all the courage he possessed to carry him through. And at the apparition J. Hornbrook Stone shrieked aloud; but the figure passed on and was gone.

Then came a sudden shout—a terrific crash—a wild chaos of sight and sound—and Stone knew no more.

When next he found his senses he was lying among cushions and rugs in the waiting-room of a small station. He did not know that he was among those whom the busy surgeons had given up as hopelessly injured.

Several of the passengers whose injuries were only slight were discussing the wreck; and, as is usual in such cases, many wild and fanciful conjectures were passed about as fact. At last one said:

"Does any one know the rights of the matter?"

"Yes, I do," volunteered a young man with an arm in a sling; and Stone lay silently listening, unable to move or speak.

"Well, what's the story?"

"Just after we passed the last station the fireman was on the front of the engine, when he felt it increasing in speed till it became so terrific that he got scared and couldn't go back, but hung on for dear life. He is a young fellow, and this is his trial trip. At length he managed to crawl back to the cab, where he found the engineer lying, as he supposed, dead. This discovery terrified him so he was only able to pull the whistle cord and stand around helplessly.

"The rear brakeman, a plucky young fellow, sensing the situation, came, as we all know, tearing to the engine"—Stone listened with all his remaining strength—"in order to stop the train before it crashed into the Midwestern Flyer, but was too late."

"But what was the matter with the engineer and the head brakeman meanwhile?"

"Well, it appears they had both been drugged—marvelous how they both escaped with only a few bruises—and as they were to have been on the eight o'clock train out of New York, that carries a whole lot of coin and currency for the Federal Reserve Bank, things look mighty queer."

Stone nearly fainted in his efforts to listen more intently.

"They were changed on to this train at the last moment, and hence this accident. The rear brakeman, poor devil, was frightfully mangled. Dead, of course; and leaves, I understand, a wife and baby. No doubt they'll make a collection for them. He was a plucky fellow."

"Does any one know his name?" asked one.

"Yes—James Stone, I think it was."

A heart-rending groan came from the cushions and rugs.

"Here!" cried a young medical student among the party to a passing surgeon, "you'd better do something for this poor fellow, doctor. He ain't as dead as you thought he was."

The surgeon came and looked at J. Hornbrook Stone.

"Isn't he?" he said in his cool, professional way; "he's a good deal farther gone than I thought. He couldn't be gone much farther."

The Hypnotic Mystery

By EARL W. SCOTT

THE bill at the Castle Grand Theatre had been of particular interest that week. Dufrey & Dufrey opened with a classy dancing act. Hop Lee Sing, famous Chinese tenor, created a mild sensation. There was a musical Tab of more than usual draft, but the headliner was Malfino the Magnificent in a half-hour of Old World Magic. All the town was flocking to see and hear this world-renowned magician and mystic.

Maxim Marx, the unpretentious but equally well-known figure in the line of crime detention, had confessed to me that down in his secret heart, ever since boyhood, was a strong love for everything magical from sleight-of-hand to the Great Trunk Mystery.

As it so happened, he was in the theatre for the third time in the week, when a startling crime occurred.

It seems the act just ahead of the great mystic was in "one." It was the Chinese tenor. He did his turn in front of the "olio," during which time the stage was being set for the headliner.

Marx sat in the orchestra circle. Several of the delightfully clever tricks, if anything done in Malfino's gorgeous style could be termed such, had intrigued his imagination and he desired to be close to the stage.

As the haunting strain of a Chinese lullaby died away and Sing kow-towed off in true oriental style upon his fourth encore, the house and stage went completely dark, and for a breathless moment there was complete stillness; then, without warning, the chandeliers went to a blaze of light with a crash of Wagnerian music. The lights faded swiftly into reds and blues, mauves and vivid greens, and the majestic and dignified hangings glittered under the glow. Malfino was truly a master of and believer in effects. The act itself followed one bewildering and difficult trick after another. At last Malfino replaced his official announcer, and, standing well down stage, proclaimed in clear tones:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to announce the final portion of my act. It is called the 'Hungarian Slumber,' and I feel that I am safe in saying it is known to but one other person, my teacher, the venerable Herr Stollowitz, now retired. This act of hypnotism is something far removed from the ordinary field of tricks which require merely a quick and trained hand. It reaches into the realms of unknown science. Such questions arise as 'Where does the mind go after sleep?' 'How long may a person remain alive, and in the dormant state?' and many, many others too intricate and involved to enter into here. I am pleased to invite all unbelievers and skeptics to visit this stage after I have performed the act.

"There are those here tonight who will go so far as to say that we maintain paid supers, using the language of the stage, who, though they may not actually be simulating sleep, at least succumb easily to the hypnotic state. For this reason we always obtain the donated and kind services of some reputed citizen.

"Tonight we are extremely fortunate in being able to announce as our model Mrs. Frederic Stone. Will you kindly step forward, Mrs. Stone?" He bowed graciously to the right-hand box.

There was a gasp from the well-mannered audience. The élite were certainly patronizing the Castle Grand and Malfino.

Whispers from all over the crowded house accompanied the lady's passage to

the stage from the box. She had risen and, pushing back her chair, bowed and smiled to gloom, then diffused into a rich purple. even went so far as to whisper that she had been training on the stage.

The bright lights slowly dimmed down to gloom, then diffused into a rich purple. In the meantime Mrs. Stone had taken a seat on the stage center. Malfino made a few low-spoken preliminary remarks, then the music died away. The theatre assumed an almost unnatural stillness. Marx afterward told me that everything else, at least for him, faded into insignificance at the strange glowing light in the great magician's eyes.

He passed slowly round in front of his subject, his dark orbs focussed on Mrs. Stone's face. Her easy smile of nonchalance faded and her gaze became fixed on those luminous eyes. Slowly the color seemed to drain from her face. Her body seemed to be gradually stiffening. Malfino stepped swiftly back till three paces separated him from the object of his attentions. His arms were raised and extended, with fingers slightly spread. They began to move ever so slowly, and gently massaged the atmosphere. The weird lighting, smoldering brass brazier, well to his right, emitting fragrance, the tense stillness of the place, all added to the spell. The passing from the living, breathing, beautiful woman who had seated herself so confidently but a few moments since, to an exquisite thing of colorless marble, was startling. It seemed to some almost sacrilegious. Then Malfino turned, a pale smile on his narrow face, and backed to the purple drop.

The people in the audience seemed almost as still as the waxen figure on the stage.

Suddenly Malfino staggered forward. A strange look crossed his features. He uttered a faint cry, tried to say something, and crashed forward on his face.

Most of the people in that crowded place thought it all a part of the mummery. Not so Marx. He had seen the look of death in the man's eyes. He stumbled across the girl's knees sitting next him, rushed up the aisle and through the clutter of trap-drums, over the footlights, and on the stage, before the curtain fell.

Consternation reigned in the audience.

After a few minutes of anxiety the manager stepped before the curtain and said:

"Friends, I fear the performance for tonight is over. You realize the bill closed with this act. I am very sorry to state that Malfino is dead. He was struck from behind by a concealed assassin during the period of his act when the stage was almost dark. If there are any physicians present, please step forward."

The audience broke in sudden exclamations.

Strange as it may seem, no one seemed to think at that time of Mrs. Frederic Stone.

The morning editions of the newspapers played up the whole affair in startling headlines. Nothing had been heard or seen of the murderer. Stage hands had been busy going to and fro, Malfino's set had been an intricate one, and required many shifts. The stage was in almost complete darkness from the beginning to the close of his act. But the most terrible thing about it all was the situation of Mrs. Frederic Stone.

She still lay in a hypnotic trance in her beautiful home on upper Fifth Avenue. Was there no one who knew of a doctor, or a second hypnotist, who could bring her back to life?

The evening editions reported no trace of the murderer. Many quacks had attempted a restorative, but unless some one could establish his or her identity they were not allowed inside the Stone mansion.

It was perhaps five o'clock of the next day that a visitor was admitted to the now almost crazed husband. Sympathizers, magicians and even mediums had offered aid, but still the Hungarian Slumber held its victim in the deepest coma.

Stone glared at the last caller.

"Well, who are you, and can you help my wife?" he demanded, as he paced his library nervously. His eyes were bright from worry and sleeplessness. He looked at the tall, well-dressed stranger more in-

tently and started. Was this Malfino himself?

The man was speaking as he removed his gloves.

"Mister Stone, I realize your extremity. I have been a hypnotist in the past. I, too, studied for a short time with the great Hungarian Stollowitz. I might help your wife, but"—he shrugged—"I may as well be candid. Things have not gone well with me of late, and of course this job is more or less professional with me, and the remuneration——" His pause was eloquent.

"Oh, the devil; anything, Mr.——?"

"Ferral Udini is the name," with a slight smile beneath the waxed mustache.

"Ten thousand if you bring her out of that cursed trance."

"Shall we say fifty thousand?" Udini's eyes were glittering behind the black brows.

"You've named your price," he gritted; now get upstairs and see what you can do."

Whatever else Udini was he was something of a hypnotist. The nurses, attending physicians and Stone himself watched the man as though under some spell themselves. There was something eminently virile about him. It was more than an overpowering personality. He inspired confidence. Removing his coat, he hung it over the back of a chair. He rolled up his sleeves, exposing well-muscled brown arms, glancing now and again at the bed, at the pallid face, now so cold and still. There was reassurance in every move. Like the late Malfino, Udini believed in effects. He crossed to the bed and laid browned hands on the alabaster forehead. Stone found himself wondering if this fellow had not spent some time recently in the tropics. With his hat off, and in a subdued light, he was surely a second Malfino. The resemblance was startling. He was rubbing gently now. He drew back, his magnetic eyes focused on the subject's face. Stone leaned forward, a flash of hope in his strained eyes. Did he dream it, or was there a slight mounting flush of life appearing in his wife's pale cheeks? Moments passed in breathless silence. Slowly, ever so slowly, those strong brown hands with the tapering fingers, Malfino's fingers almost, were working back and forth literally kneading the air. Gradually, ever so slowly, the still figure on the bed began to show signs of returning life. Her bosom began to rise and fall. Finally color flooded her cheeks. Her eyelids fluttered. She took one deep breath, sighed, opened her eyes, and fell to crying softly.

Undini stood at the door. He was shaking hands again with the delighted and relieved Stone. Pocketing a thick bill-fold, he turned, placed his hat firmly on his head and took one step forward. Then a hand fell on his shoulder.

"Just a moment, please." He turned, paling slightly, to look into the eyes of a slender little man in gray.

"Who are you?" he asked coldly.

"Maxim Marx."

"And what do you want?" The tone was colder.

"You murdered your cousin, Malfino!" shouted Marx.

Udini whipped out a revolver. People turned at the sound of the shot. They saw the tall, dark man sinking to the sidewalk. There were several policemen appearing from all directions. A patrol wagon rolled up to the curb, and the entire party, assisting the fallen man, and shepherded by the slender figure of the detective, clamered in and rolled away.

Maxim lit another cigarette.

"You see," he continued, "I was watching Malfino's act so closely that I saw the knife penetrate the curtain. I was seated well forward and somewhat to one side. I was up through the orchestra, over the footlights and back stage before the curtain dropped. I began asking questions. Everybody was confused, especially the stage-manager, who could not for the life of him see how Malfino lay stabbed out in front of the drop, when he had been with him but the moment before. It was here that I began figuring that the murderer may have resembled the magician.

I quizzed the doorman who, in bewilderment, acknowledged having seen Malfino actually leaving the theatre five minutes

previously. This made me think the criminal resembled his victim. I told the doorman to keep this to himself for a bit and hurried out after my man.

"It seems that Malfino, among other virtues, was a great lover of children. He was constantly giving little girls pennies in the street. In fact, his was a well-known foible.

"As I hurried into the dark alley from the stage I saw two ragged specimens of the newsboy variety lingering in the shadow of the stage door.

" 'See anything of a tall dark man, wearing a mustache, leaving here lately, boys?' I asked.

" 'Sure. You mean Malfino. Say, mister, he promised to give us a feed after de show, but he just gives us de 'go by' when he comes out.'

" 'Which way did he go?'

" 'He beats it up de alley and hails a yellow cab. We follers 'im, an' he says, "Treetoity Western avenue an' quick," he says.'

"They began fighting over the quarter I tossed them, and I soon found myself on Western avenue. Please remember I did not know the man's name yet, but was due for a piece of luck at his lodgings.

" 'Has your tall, dark roomer left?' I hazarded to the sleepy landlady, when she came to the door.

" 'Mister Udini, you'll be meanin'. Yes, he has relatives in Philadelphia, and often goes down there. He left for the Pennsylvania station not ten minutes ago.'

"I chanced to be slightly acquainted with the young fellow behind the ticket window at the station.

" 'Tall, dark fellow with a mustache, Mister Marx?' he repeated. 'That would be Malfino, no? I recognized him at once. He seemed to be in an awful hurry over something. Got sort of miffed. Where to? Why, Philly, on the eleven-fifty.'

"I thanked him, and glanced at my watch. It was eleven-forty-seven. I had just three minutes to make the gate and train. I succeeded.

"There are some cases when it seems that all the gods of the universe are against a man. Everything goes wrong. Then, on the other hand they actually seem to grease the track for we poor devils of detectives," Marx grinned. "This case ran the smoothest of any I can remember of having worked on in many a year.

"To continue. My man rode the smoker all the way in, and I, of course, did the same.

"I followed him to his hotel. Had him watched while I grabbed off a little sleep, and was after him the next day bright and early. He visited old man Stollowitz, who it seems is visiting a sister in this country. I suppose he was after some more information concerning the Hungarian Sleep that the old codger had made famous.

"My man and I returned to this city late that same afternoon, Udini went straight out to the Stone residence, leaving his luggage in a downtown hotel.

"In the meantime, Father Time had put in some good licks for Mister Udini. No one had brought the woman out of her sleep. Now it was beginning to look as though no one could.

"Udini, bolstered up by his additional information, decided it was time to strike. As I left the station, I was handed a message from some of the boys who had been on the job for me here in town. I discovered the relationship between Udini and Malfino and also the knowledge of the late trouble over their lately deceased uncle's will. Udini had been a professional hypnotist in the past, having gone over the 'small-time' years since as Malfino's brother. I take it there was a great deal of jealousy, and had been for some time, existing between these two, particularly on Udini's part.

"I, of course, followed Udini to the Stone residence, being careful not to accost him until after his work was done.

"The circumstances pointed so strongly to the man I acted on my hunch, and tackled him as he left the house. His answer was to pull a gun. As usual his foreign hatred played him false. I was forced to shoot. He did not even deny his guilt.

"He evidently had been contemplating that crime for some time, but waited until his spectacular deliverance would be for a subject that could afford to pay big money."

The Forbidden Room

By EDWARD LEE BENNETT

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

A MYSTERIOUS DEATH

"A-A-A-M-O-C-R—." The echoes which Risi's powerful voice had once thrilled into vibrant melody broke in a torrent of throaty discordance. With a wide-flung gesture of mute despair the opera singer threw up his arms and made a hasty exit. Beyond doubt it was the most amazing failure opera had ever witnessed. In one awful second Risi, a name to conjure with, had become a synonym with disaster and defeat. It was incredible.

Police Inspector Rice, sitting in his favorite corner well back in the auditorium, leaned forward in evident agitation. Could it be true, or had he fallen asleep and dreamed it? He rubbed his eyes. He hardly heard the hysterical laughter of women, the sobs of Risi's countrymen, the indescribable babel which ensued. Alas, it was too true. Already the manager was announcing that another artist would carry on the performance, delicately refraining from any mention of the great tenor's failure.

Nothing mattered now. The performance might go on and on forever; great tenors might pour forth their very souls; there was but one Risi, and without him there would always be a void in the hearts of his admirers. Why had he attempted the impossible? Why had he returned once too often to the scene of his former triumphs?

The outpouring throng suddenly went mad. 'Extra' papers screamed the astounding news of Risi's suicide in six-inch headlines. He had shot himself through the head. The idol had crumbled into clay.

While the frenzied public fought desperately about the bulletin-boards and literally mobbed the newsboys, a quiet group was assembled in Risi's studio. He had been found face to the floor with a bullet hole in his temple and the fatal revolver at his fingertips. To all appearance it was a clear and simple case of suicide. Severe powder burns indicated that the bullet had been fired at extremely close range, apparently proving that Risi had died by his own hand.

Elsie, the maid, was perhaps the most important witness. She confessed in trembling accents that she had often stolen up to the fourth floor to listen to the great tenor practicing. The fourth floor of Risi's house was of special sound-proof construction, and by Risi's express orders no one had been allowed on that floor besides himself, except his manservant, Toops. Love of music had tempted the maid to disobey her master's instructions, and practically every evening, while Risi was singing, she had secreted herself in one of the smaller rooms which adjoined the large circular studio where Risi's lifeless body had been found.

As usual that evening she had stolen up to the fourth floor at the first opportunity, and had hidden in a small anteroom at the head of the stairs. She had scarcely gained her hiding-place before she saw Toops come up the stairs and enter the studio. Shortly after Risi began humming. Then came a brief silence followed by two shots. Toops came rushing out. Frantic with terror, the maid remained in the anteroom for some time before she mustered courage

enough to enter the singer's sanctum, where she found him prostrate on the floor with a bullet wound in his temple.

This sight so unnerved her that at first she was afraid to reveal what she had heard and seen. However, the horror of the situation grew upon her so that she broke down and confessed to the housekeeper. The latter called the police immediately.

There was little reason to question the girl's story. Perhaps she had unconsciously colored her recital more or less, but the facts stood out with the indomitable ring of truth. She had been almost passionate in her defense of Risi. His voice had not been failing. On the contrary, it had been sweeter and stronger than ever. As to time she had no idea whatsoever. She had not known that Risi was to sing that night. Apparently he had regained his room after leaving the opera-house only a short while before Elsie had ventured on forbidden ground.

"You are absolutely certain you saw Toops enter the studio before the shots and leave afterward?" Rice questioned.

"Yes, sir," she returned, quetly but positively; "I saw him very plainly when he came up the stairs and of course it must have been he who rushed out after the shots."

"You are sure that two shots were fired?"

"Yes, sir. I could not be mistaken about that. There was one shot, and some seconds later another.

"What do you think of it, Bob?"

Rice turned to his assistant, a shrewd young detective, who had proved of invaluable aid on more than one occasion.

Carson raised his head slowly. He was always deliberate in his conclusions.

"There are a few points about this that puzzle me," he admitted. "I'd like to have a talk with you when you get an opportunity."

Rice nodded his satisfaction. He was pleased to know that his protégé was not satisfied with appearances.

"All right," he agreed laconically. "We'll have our little chat just as soon as we get through with the servants.

"Where is this man Toops?" Rice asked the housekeeper.

"I don't know, sir," was her reply. "As you ordered, all the servants have been assembled here. Toops could not be found."

"Just what sort of a person is this Toops, anyhow, and what were his duties? Tell me in your own words, Mrs. Poindexter."

The housekeeper cleared her throat.

"Well, sir, Toops was the master's special assistant. He was the only person allowed on this floor besides Signor Risi himself. Sometimes he slept here and sometimes he ate here. He did about what he pleased and had more authority than I did."

"Risi's right-hand man, eh?"

"Yes, sir, you might call him that."

"Were you here before he came?"

"Yes, sir, several years. Toops came came here about five years ago. I remember it well. Signor Risi called me into the library and told me that he had engaged a special manservant who was to have general charge of things about the house. The master was sort of laughing all the time he talked, as if it was a great joke. For a while I thought that he was making game of me just to see what I would say. But about two hours later the maid told me that a man named Toops was at the door. I showed him up to the third floor myself and pointed to the stairs that led to the studio as Signor Risi had instructed me. Ever since then Toops has been meddling into everything."

"What sort of a person is he?"

"Peculiar, sir, I would call him, with a whining voice and a stoop. He is also very ugly. I have often thought that he wears a wig, but I have never been able to make sure."

"Can you give me any facts about Risi that might be valuable in the light of what has happened? What sort of a man was he about the house? Did he ever impress you as subject to depression?"

"No, sir, he never did. As I was just saying, he was about the last one in the world one would expect to commit suicide. Mean and angry and all that he often was, sir, but never downcast. He wasn't that kind. He was more or less of a problem to me and to the rest of the servants. Of course he was artistic, and I presume artists

must be temperamental. I've been here, as I've told you, for more than eight years, and I can't say that I know one thing more about him than the rest of the world. Today is the first time I have ever set foot on this floor. Signor Risi kept very much to himself. Of course he entertained occasionally and gave dinners—they were grand affairs—but I don't think he had an intimate friend in the world except, perhaps, Toops."

"I see," was the Inspector's brief comment. "What was Toops's attitude toward Risi?" he continued.

The housekeeper was plainly perplexed.

"As to that, sir," she replied uncertainly, "I really couldn't say. In all the time Toops has been here I don't believe I ever saw him and the master together. And yet Toops was the only one allowed on this floor, and slept and ate here like the master. Sometimes he praised Signor Risi and sometimes he abused and threatened him terribly. But I always thought that he talked that way to draw the rest of us out."

"So Toops abused and threatened Risi, did he?"

"Yes, sir, he did."

"One more question, Mrs. Poindexter, I understand no one was allowed on this floor with the exception of Risi and Toops?"

"Yes, sir; that is correct. Sometimes Signor Risi slept here and sometimes Toops did, unless either one of them took a notion to sleep in one of the rooms downstairs. The same way with meals. Sometimes Toops brought up one meal and sometimes two. And, of course, sometimes one of them ate downstairs. But as near as I could make out, sir—and all the other servants think the same—there was always one of them on guard up here. The both of them were never downstairs at the same time."

"On guard?"

"It looked that way to us, sir, although I don't profess to understand it. Signor Risi caught one of the maids up here once. He was very angry and discharged her at once. If he had caught Elsie, she would have gone, too."

"You have no idea what the mystery of this room might be?"

"No, sir, not the slightest. I used to be real curious at first, but when I realized that there was no way of finding out, I almost forgot about it."

"Thank you, Mrs. Poindexter. I may have some more questions to ask you later. Will you have the chauffeur sent in?"

Hudson, the chauffeur, had little to tell. Toops had ordered him to have the car ready to drive the singer to the opera-house. Toops and Risi had come out of the house into the courtyard together. This in itself seemed very unusual to the chauffeur as, like the housekeeper, he did not remember ever having seen them together before. Like the other servants he was under the impression that a guard was always maintained on the top floor of the mansion.

Risi was in his opera costume. This was not unusual. However, the singer's actions had seemed strange. Usually he hummed one aria after another all the while he rode and bantered the chauffeur. This night he had been silent. After leaving Risi at the opera-house Hudson had driven back to the mansion, intending to call for him after the performance was over. In the meantime Risi's death had been discovered.

'Well, Bob, what do you make of it. It is a puzzling case."

Rice turned to his assistant when they were left alone.

"I don't know what to think about it," Carson replied, "but I know it isn't suicide. That second shot puzzles me. I've been all over the place without finding a trace of the bullet. Another thing is the appearance of the wound in Risi's forehead. It doesn't strike me that the revolver was fired point-blank as the powder burns would indicate. Then there's the mystery of this room. Why all the secrecy and guard duty? If the servants haven't been able to find out anything in the course of years, and you know how prying and curious some servants are, I think we're going to have our time fully occupied in running this to earth in a few days. First of all, it seems to me that this man Toops ought to be found. He must know something, even if he didn't fire the fatal shot."

"I agree with you in every particular,

Bob," his chief said. "Now, what do you think of this cuff-link?"

Carson examined the cuff-link very carefully which Rice tendered.

"Expensive," he appraised, "without doubt. But who is 'C. M.?"

" 'C. M.' without a doubt stands for Clinton Mordell, the singer whom Risi knocked down about a month ago. He has made threats and there had been bad blood—but we won't rush to conclusions. I just picked this link off the floor. We will have enough suspects before the week is over and Mordell won't find himself alone. By the way, there has been a lot of talk lately about Risi and Mira Janese."

"The burlesque queen?"

"Exactly. That's her picture on the mantel. She'll probably bear watching——"

A woman's shrill scream came to their ears—more like the snarl of an enraged tigress than a cry of distress. Rice and Carson sprang simultaneously for the stairway. They found the butler in one of the rooms on the next floor grappling with a blonde feminine fury, who bit and clawed like a wildcat.

"Let me go, you fool!" the woman was demanding as the detectives burst upon the scene. Rice wrested a long thin dagger from her small wiry hand none too soon. The butler escaped with a slight scratch on his hand.

"I caught her. She was hiding in here and started to run down the hall just as I came along," he explained in a breathless manner.

"Good!" was Rice's curt comment. "Now, Miss Janese," he proceeded, turning to the woman, who was arranging her disordered clothes, "please sit down in that chair. I have a few questions to ask you."

She eyed him boldly, but obeyed without remonstrance. She busied herself rearranging her beautiful blonde curls as nonchalantly as if she were in the privacy of her boudoir with no troublesome explanations to make. Her composure had returned, transforming her from a desperate woman into the saucy Janese, whom the world of burlesque knew so well. A tantalizing smile curled about the corners of her provoking rouged lips.

"First I am going to ask you to explain your presence here," Rice demanded.

"Whose business is that, and who are you, anyhow?" she asked easily.

"I am Inspector Rice of the Police Department," he told her, "and I am questioning you in connection with something very serious which happened here a short while ago."

She met his glance for a moment and then dropped her eyes without any trace of fear.

"Something has happened?" she repeated in her distinctive enunciation. "I am sorry, but I know nothing about it. I came here merely to get something I left the other day. Signor Risi will bear me out in that The man frightened me and of course I defended myself. I had no idea who he was or why he was attacking me—in fact, I haven't yet."

"I am sorry," Rice persisted, "but your explanation doesn't satisfy me. Unless you are able to account for your presence here, I may be obliged to hold you in connection with the death of Signor Risi."

"Risi—dead—they wouldn't do that—no, no, not murder!"

The words came falteringly through nerveless lips. Her eyes stared at nothing. For perhaps the first time in Mira Janese's eventful career her faint was not simulated. Rice caught the limp figure as she slumped forward.

"As in life so in death," Rice predicted solemnly in a reflective moment, "Risi will startle the world if I am not mistaken. Let the papers keep the suicide verdict, which they have accepted so hastily and unquestionally, for the present. We will have our say later. Opera singers do not live like other people, nor do they die like others. In my opinion we are going to unravel a badly tangled skein before we arrive at the truth."

Extravagant though his words may have sounded at the moment, the events which followed were destined to make this prophecy seem conservative indeed.

CHAPTER TWO

TRAILING MORDELL

CLINTON MORDELL still bore the earmarks of the butcher he had been before fate transported him from a grimy market stall to the foremost rank in grand opera. Grossly corpulent, with swinish eyes, he was anything but prepossessing. Meteoric though his rise to fame had been, the zenith where the omnipotent Risi ruled alone had been impregnable. From the first bad blood had rankled between the two.

Beginning with words, the culmination came when the powerful Italian felled his obese enemy with a sledge-hammer blow of his clenched fist. Mordell had raved of revenge. Though who knew his treacherous nature well believed him capable of anything, even murder.

There was no question about Mordell's virtuosity as a singer. Endowed with a sweetly magnificent voice, he lacked only the subtle indefinable charm which was Risi's birthright. Ascending to the front rank in opera by trampling ruthlessly over those who stood in his path, Mordell was unprepared to submit to the patronage of Risi.

The day after Risi's sensational death, Bob Carson found Mordell nervously pacing the sitting-room of his luxurious apartment. Despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary which Carson frankly presented, the singer vehemently denied that he had ever been inside Risi's mansion. He professed no alibi; had been seen by several people in the vicinity of Risi's home on the evening before; his cuff-link had been found on the studio floor. Yet in the face of all, he assumed an air of injured or rather angry innocence.

"Go ahead, you fools, and frame me up if you think it'll get you anywhere," he roared in beefy-faced rage. "I didn't kill Risi, and that's all you'll get out of me. I know nothing about it at all except what anybody with a grain of intelligence can see—that Risi committed suicide after his failure. That much is clear to anybody. And now you're trying to fasten his death on some poor devil. No, I refuse to be dragged into it."

"I came here to do you a favor," Carson reminded him quietly. "I've given you a chance to explain some things which may cause you considerable trouble. I've laid our cards on the table. If you don't care to reciprocate, I have nothing further to say."

Carson left the singer spluttering with rage. There was little doubt but that such a man would commit murder with sufficient provocation, certainly with less than that of thwarted ambitions and a blow in the face.

Knowing his man as he did, Carson was too experienced an investigator to entertain any serious hope of obtaining information of value from Mordell. His real purpose in confronting the tenor was soon rewarded, when from the shadow of a doorway on the other side of the street, he saw the singer coming down the steps of his apartment. Mordell glanced furtively up and down the street and then stole rapidly toward the avenue, frequently glancing behind, as if fearing pursuit. Carson followed at a safe distance.

Mordell's destination proved to be a neat three-story brick dwelling in the rooming-house district. Reassuring himself again against being followed, he ascended the short stone steps and entered without the preliminary of ringing the bell. Carson waited a few minutes and followed.

Pausing in the long hall in which he found himself, the detective gathered from the murmur of voices that Mordell was in the middle room on the first floor with a companion. By applying his ear to the door which opened into the parlor he could hear every word.

"Money, Mr. Mordell, that's all I want, but I must have it. I know a few things the police don't. The papers say that Risi committed suicide, but that's pure bunk and you and I know it. When you and Toops were going over your little plans in his room upstairs, you didn't know that I could hear every word you said. Toops has flown the coop but you're still here. You couldn't

fool me. I doped out who you were right from the start. You killed——"

"Stop, you sneaking dog, or I'll——"

"Oh, no, you won't. Keep your distance. I've got something in my pocket here that will make you behave. Sneaking dog I may be—I could call you worse names than that. But I'm not here for that. Let's get down to business."

"Perhaps I was a bit hasty," Mordell's purring voice placated, "but I was excited. You needn't hold that gun so tightly. I'm not going to bother you. Now of course I had nothing to do with Risi's death. As a matter of fact, he committed suicide. But I can't afford to have any idle rumors floating around. It would ruin me. So I'm willing to give you a little to keep your mouth shut—you understand?"

"I understand, all right. Put it any way you want to as long as I get the money. How much am I going to get?"

"How about a thousand dollars?"

"Two would be twice as good."

"All right. I'll give you two."

"Can you have it here some time tomorrow?"

"Yes, you'll get it tomorrow. But remember it's every cent you'll get out of me. How about Toops? You were saying that he hasn't been here for several days? Have you any idea where he is?"

"No, I haven't. He's probably skipped after what happened."

"I think I'll take a look in his room."

"Go ahead. Help yourself. If I don't see you when you come down, don't forget the money."

Mordell's footsteps echoed up the uncarpeted stairs, while his companion, evidently the landlord, retreated to the rear of the house. Carson left quietly and stationed himself behind a large tree on the opposite side of the street. After an interval of some minutes, Mordell came out and turned toward the rougher section of the city.

The pursuit became easier as the streets were irregular and cut by numerous alleys. This time the chase led to the Silver Sea Shell, a bohemian inn largely patronized by the artistic and sporting element. Mordell's face was turned toward the door as the detective entered. The latter made his way to a secluded corner. There were few people there. The Silver Sea Shell's attraction was wholly in the late night and early morning hours, when gayety was rampant and unrestrained.

(*Concluded in our next issue.*)

DESERTERS FLEE GOVERNOR'S ISLAND

THE authorities of Governor's Island as well as the police of New York are searching for two prisoners who, while on parole, escaped from the island.

The men are Paul J. Fischer, 22 years old, and Harry Elrot, 26, both of whom had been arrested for desertion and sentenced to serve the term of one year in the disciplinary barracks.

Fischer and Elrot were exceptional men, Col. Yates said, and for this reason had been permitted to leave the barracks on parole.

Both men were privates. Fischer is described as six feet tall, weighing 180 pounds and having blond hair. He was smooth shaven when he escaped.

Elrot is five feet five inches tall, has black hair and dark complexion.

Both wore the regulation prison uniform when they escaped, consisting of brown overalls and jumpers, with campaign hats without cords. But it is taken for granted that they exchanged this attire for civilian clothes as soon as they found a refuge.

Col. Yates said that the escape was a foolish act on the part of the men, as their terms were soon to expire. Fischer had enlisted in Harrison, Ind., and deserted from Fort Benjamin there. His sentence of one year would have expired on January 4, 1925. Elrot was sentenced to one year on the island for deserting from the Letterman General Hospital at San Francisco.

What Handwriting Reveals

CONDUCTED BY LOUISE RICE

Send us a specimen of your writing with the coupon printed on page 63 and Miss Rice will analyze the handwriting free of charge. The answer will be published in a future number of this magazine. Only a limited number of replies can be printed in each issue, owing to lack of space. If you desire an earlier reply in the form of a personal letter from Miss Rice, send us the sample of your writing and the coupon, and enclose 10 cents and a self-addressed stamped envelope, to cover the cost of handling, stationery, etc., and Miss Rice will promptly send you an answer. No readings will be given unless accompanied by a coupon for each individual.

—THE EDITOR.

Miss E. P., Milwaukee.—The gentleness and moderation which are yours are wonderful traits, but they can be too strong, contradictory as that statement may seem. They make you too "easy" with people; they cause you to be too easily imposed on, especially by people for whom you care. Your nature is admirable in many ways, but in a world where the average person still has a little, at least, of the jungle beast left in them, people like you are at a good deal of an advantage. All that you can do is to pull in your defences a little and try to really estimate the people with whom you have to do. In a business way look out especially for this. So far as people whom you love are concerned, it is of no use for me to tell you not to let them impose on you, for nothing in the world would change you in that respect. You might harden toward others, but never toward them, no matter what they did to you.

Mrs. Fannie McB.—Well, my dear, there are different ways of looking at these things, you know. Personally, I can't see that a woman has any right to ask money from a man on the score that she has been his wife for a few years. If she has been with him a lifetime, or if she has children, then, indeed, she can claim that all of her life has gone into enriching his—but a woman who has a profession she has followed all the time of her brief marriage, as you have—no, I don't see that there is any justice in that at all. The specimen of your divorced husband's handwriting shows that he is warm-hearted and affectionate, while you, with all your fineness of mind and your real courage and ambition, are not at all loving. I don't wonder that he has been attracted, now, to the woman whose handwriting you enclose with his. She is of his type. You are too big and sensible a woman to keep on with this small and unworthy attitude of yours about money. Go right on to make even a greater personal success than you have ever had and forget all about this unfortunate experiment with marriage.

J. S. Bealings.—Caution in the use of money is one of your strongest characteristics. You are a person to whom thrift is instinctive, and I am sure that you utterly fail to understand the people who have not that quality of character. You are careful, orderly and sincere, entirely and scrupulously honest, and full of business ambition. All this is most worth while from a practical standpoint, but it is a standpoint which excludes a good many things. For instance, you lack the ideality and tenderness which you need. You lack the understanding of people who are different from yourself. Try to realize that there are many things in this world which have nothing to do with money or success, which are even more precious than they are. So far as work goes, you ought to deal in real estate or in any real estate promotion, or have charge of renting. In all such avenues you will find success and interest.

Notice To Our Readers!

Let us tell you ahead what a fine array of interesting material we have selected for your entertainment in the coming issue of this magazine. The best attraction is, of course, the featured novelette,

"WALLED IN"

FRANK BLIGHTON wrote it. You all know what a dynamic author of vivid scenes he is. Well, his latest story is a marvel of interest. Do not miss reading it under any circumstances.

RADIO LISTENERS, WATCH FOR

"RED SHADE SAVES A HUNDRED"

By J. B. WARRENTON

Here is a story that was recently broadcast by WJZ before it was published. Now you can read it in our next number.

The Serial, "THE FORBIDDEN ROOM"

By E. L. BENNETT

ends in No. 169. If you think the first instalments is interesting wait till you read the second! It will hold you spellbound, for the interest and excitement keep growing up to the very last paragraph.

ROUSING SHORT STORIES COMING

"THE SEVENTH GLASS" was written by CHARLES M. GREEN and is simply splendid. "THE PROTECTOR" is a powerful yarn by OSCEOLA MADDEN that cannot fail to make your nerves tingle. "THE STILL," a composition of JAMES BENEDICT, is one of those stories filled with suspense that you can't quit until it's finished. "THE ACCOMPLICE" is a little gem produced by W. F. TOBIAS that will please you. "THE IMPOSSIBLE CRIME," paradoxical as the title seems, is one of L. BURK'S best stories.

"WHAT HANDWRITING REVEALS"

Conducted by LOUISE RICE

will continue to give our readers all sorts of good advice, and a reading of your character free of charge. See page 60 if you wish to take advantage of this service.

MANY SHORT ARTICLES

are going to appear in the next issue, every one of vital interest. Please be sure to read them.

THE EDITOR.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaski.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static
122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler
124 "The Secret of Room 13," by Hamilton Craigie.
125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
126 "Seals of Wax," by Jack Bechdolt.
127 "When Crooks Conspire," by Harold F. Podhaski.
128 "The Mystery of the Blue Car," by H. Craigie
129 "The Detective and the Law," by Frederick F. Shuey.
130 "The Hand in the Dark," by Chas. F. Oursler.
131 "The Trail of a Rogue," by George Bronson-Howard.
132 "The Woman from Nowhere," by Jack Bechdolt
133 "The Time Detective," by Frank Blighton.
134 "The Whispering-Room," by Frederick C. Davis.
135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
136 "The Doom of the Damned," by Joe Burke.
137 "The Consuming Death," by Gilbert Hammond.
138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.
139 "The Brass Voice," by Jack Bechdolt.
140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
142 "Blood Rubies," by J. Werner Phelps.
143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
145 "On the Yellows," by Frank Blighton.
146 "The Argentine Ruby," by Beulah and Shirley Poynter.
147 "The Barrington Arms Case," by Jack Bechdolt.
148 "Hounded," by Frank Blighton.
149 "Direct Action," by Dr. Harry Enton.
150 "The Footprints On the Ceiling," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
151 "The One Chance," by Thomas Ripley.
152 "Weapons of Hate," by Eric Howard.
153 "In Reserve," by Frank Blighton.
154 "The House on the Rocks," by Jack Bechdolt.

If you cannot procure any of the numbers you want from your newsdealer, send us the price, ten cents, in money or postage stamps, and we will mail them to you postage free.

The price of the following numbers is 15 cents:

155 "Laughing Death's Trail," by Nels Leroy Jorgensen.
156 "The Medicine Dropper," by G. P. Wilson.
157 "A Question of Kick," by Eugene Jones.
158 "The Mystery at Roaring Waters," by Harry Adler.
159 "The River Pirates," by Hamilton Craigie.
160 "The Shadow of a Noose," by Jack Bechdolt.
161 "At 2 A. M.," by Beulah Poynter.
162 "The Intriguers," by Grover Kidwell.
163 "The Lock and Key," by Hamilton Craigie.
164 "The Talking Dog," by Frank Blighton.
165 "The Heart on the Mirror," by Alexander Morrison.
166 "Mixed Motives," by Eric Howard.
167 "Southwest of the Law," by Hamilton Craigie.

HARRY E. WOLFF, Publisher, Inc., 166 West 23d Street, New York City, N. Y.

OUR TEN-CENT HAND BOOKS

Useful, Instructive, and Amusing. They contain Valuable Information on Almost Every Subject.

No. 23. HOW TO EXPLAIN DREAMS. — This little book gives the explanation to all kinds of dreams, together with lucky and unlucky days.

No. 28. HOW TO TELL FORTUNES.—Every one is desirous of knowing what his future life will bring forth, whether happiness or misery, wealth or poverty. You can tell by a glance at this little book. Buy one and be convinced.

No. 40. HOW TO MAKE AND SET TRAPS. — Including hints on how to catch moles, weasels, otter, rats, squirrels and birds. Also how to cure skins. Copiously illustrated.

No. 41. THE BOYS OF NEW YORK END MEN'S JOKE BOOK. — Containing a great variety of the latest jokes used by the most famous end men. No amateur minstrels is complete without this wonderful little book.

No. 42. THE BOYS OF NEW YORK STUMP SPEAKER. — Containing a varied assortment of Stump speeches, Negro, Dutch and Irish. Also end men's jokes. Just the thing for home amusement and amateur shows.

No. 45. THE BOYS OF NEW YORK MINSTREL GUIDE AND JOKE BOOK. — Something new and very instructive. Every boy should obtain this book, as it contains full instructions for organizing an amateur minstrel troupe.

No. 53. HOW TO WRITE LETTERS. — A wonderful little book, telling you how to write to your sweetheart, your father, mother, sister, brother, employer; and in fact, everybody and anybody you wish to write to.

No. 58. HOW TO BE A DETECTIVE. — By Old King Brady, the well-known detective. In which he lays down some valuable rules for beginners, and also relates some adventures of well-known detectives.

No. 60. HOW TO BECOME A PHOTOGRAPHER. — Containing useful information regarding the Camera and how to work it; also how to make Photographic Magic Lantern Slides and other Transparencies. Handsomely illustrated.

No. 64. HOW TO MAKE ELECTRICAL MACHINES. — Containing full directions for making electrical machines, induction coils, dynamos and many novel toys to be worked by electricity. By B. A. R. Bennett. Fully illustrated.

No. 65. MULDOON'S JOKES.—The most original joke book ever published, and it is brimful of wit and humor. It contains a large collection of songs, jokes, conundrums, etc., of Terrence Muldoon, the great wit, humorist and practical joker of the day.

No. 67. HOW TO DO ELECTRICAL TRICKS. —Containing a large collection of instructive and highly amusing electrical tricks, together with illustrations. By A. Anderson.

No. 68. HOW TO DO CHEMICAL TRICKS.— Containing over one hundred highly amusing and instructive tricks with chemicals. By A. Anderson. Handsomely illustrated.

For sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address on receipt of price, 10c. per copy, in money or stamps, by

HARRY E. WOLFF, Publisher, Inc.
166 West 23d Street, New York City

Make Yourself Slender!

It's easy to do. Thousands of men and women each year regain healthy, **slender** figures simply by taking *Marmola Prescription Tablets.* No doubt you have heard many of your friends tell what wonderful results these tablets produce—how easy they are to take, how pleasant they are, how slender they make you.

Don't envy other people's slender, shapely figures. Get one yourself. Go to your druggist and ask for a box of *Marmola Prescription Tablets,* or, if you prefer, send one dollar to the Marmola Co., 1825 General Motors Bldg., Detroit, Mich., and a box will be sent postpaid. You only have to try them for a short time—you will start to get slender almost immediately. No tiresome exercises or starvation diets. These tablets alone will give you the slender figure you want. Get a box today and see for yourself.

Boys and Girls
EARN XMAS MONEY!
Write for 50 Sets St. Nicholas Christmas Seals. Sell for 10c a set. When sold send us $3.00 and keep $2.00. No Work—Just Fun.
ST. NICHOLAS
2814 Glenwood Rd. Dept. 147, Brooklyn, N. Y.

What do *you* think

Do you regard marriage a 'failure'.
Are you looking forward to a proposal.
Can you make the most of your chances.
Do you want the 'secret' of happy marriages.

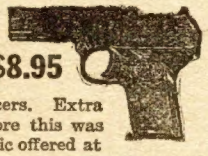
Let me send you natures guide to real love and happy marriages Avoid mistakes and regrets by writing for this secret of how to decide and whom to marry.

A dime will bring this new guide to you in a plain wrapper, postpaid. Send me for it now.

Guide Pub. Co., P.O. Box 44, Notley, N.J.

SEND NO MONEY

Super "32" Police AUTOMATIC



32 Cal. 15-shot super-automatic like those used by German military army officers. Extra magazine free. Never before this was any 15-shot 32 Cal. Automatic offered at this price..... $8.95

$8.95

Latest Model 9-shot 25 Cal. Mauser automatic, lies flat in pocket. Special at..... $10.75
32 Cal. Mauser..... $11.45
World's Famous Luger 30 Cal..... $17.25
Top Break Revolver 32 or 38 Cal., Special at.. $7.95

Satisfaction Guaranteed or Money Back. Send No Money. Pay Postman Our Price, Plus Postage.

All Brand New Guns. Use Standard Ammunition.

Pocket Automatic

$6.75 For dependable construction and smoothness of action this 7-shot 25-Cal. automatic cannot be beat... **$6.75**

WATTS TRADING CO.
11 Warren St., Dept. 323 New York City

MORPHINE

New Home Treatment
Send Stamp for Book of Information
DR. QUAYLE'S SANITARIUM
MADISON, OHIO. DEPT. S55

Are You Lonesome? Write Eva Moore, Box 908, Jacksonville, Fla. Stamp Appreciated.

EARN $25 weekly, spare time, writing for newspapers, magazines. Experience unnecessary. Details free. Press Syndicate, 1058, St. Louis.

EARN $20 weekly spare time, at home, addressing, mailing music, circulars. Send 10c for music, information. **American Music Co., 1658 Broadway, Dept. M-22, New York.**

$——— OLD MONEY WANTED ———$
$2 to $500 EACH paid for hundreds of old coins. Keep ALL Old or odd money, it may be VERY valuable. Send 10 cts. for ILLUSTRATED COIN VALUE BOOK, 4x6. Get Posted. We pay CASH.
CLARKE COIN CO., Ave 13, LeRoy, N. Y.

BE A DETECTIVE

Earn Big Money Travel Big Demand
Experience unnecessary. We train you. Write
AMERICAN DETECTIVE SYSTEM,
1968 Broadway New York City

$36 to $56 WEEKLY in your spare time doing special advertising work among the families of your city. No experience necessary. Write today for full particulars.
AMERICAN PRODUCTS CO.
1976 American Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio

Sell TIRES
DIRECT FROM FACTORY

We want an auto owner in each locality to advertise Armour Cords. You can make big money and get your own sample Tires Free, by sending us orders from friends and neighbors. No capital or experience needed. We deliver & collect direct. Pay you daily.

Most Liberal Tire Guarantee Ever Written

Armour Cords guaranteed by Indemnity Bond against Blow Out, Wear and Tear, Stone Bruise, Tread Separation, Blistering and Rim Cut for 12,500 miles. We are actual manufacturers. Write today for great Special Offer to Agents, and low Factory Prices.

ARMOUR TIRE & RUBBER CO., Dept. 560 Dayton, O.

EARN MONEY WEEKLY, spare time home addressing, mailing, music, circulars. Send 10c for information. New England Music Co., 234 Capen, Dept. K-3, Hartford, Conn.

COUPON

Entitling the signer to one "reading of character" by Louise Rice.

Name.....

Address.....

City or State.....

Finding "The Fountain of Youth"

A Long-Sought Secret, Vital to Happiness, Has Been Discovered.

By Walter S. Dean

Alas! that spring should vanish with the rose!
That youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
—Omar Khayyam.

A SECRET vital to human happiness has been discovered. An answer to an ancient problem which, sooner or later, affects the welfare of virtually every man and woman. As this problem undoubtedly will come to you eventually, if it has not come already, I urge you to read this article carefully. It may give you information of a value beyond all price.

This newly-revealed secret is not a new "philosophy" nor a financial formula. It is not a political panacea. It has to do with something of far greater moment to the individual—human happiness, especially in the later years of life. And there is nothing theoretical, imaginative or fantastic about it, because it comes from the coldly exact realms of the practical where values must be proved. It "works." And because it does work—most delightfully—it is one of the most important discoveries made in years. Thousands already bless it for having rescued them from disappointment and misery. Millions will rejoice because of it in years to come.

The peculiar value of this discovery is in its virtue for lifting the physical handicaps resulting from the premature waning of the vital forces of life, whether due to overwork, over-worry, sickness or the general over-expenditure of nervous energy in the strenuous living typical of the modern day. True happiness does not depend on wealth, position or fame. Primarily, it is a matter of health. Not the inefficient, "half-alive" condition which ordinarily passes as "health," but the abundant, vibrant, magnetic vitality of superb manhood and womanhood.

Unfortunately, this kind of health is rare. Our civilization, with its wear and tear, rapidly depletes

recuperative capacity, and, in a physical sense, old age comes on when life should be at its prime.

But this is not a tragedy of our era alone. Ages ago a Persian poet, in the world's most melodious epic of pessimism, voiced humanity's immemorial complaint that "spring should vanish with the rose" and the song of summer too soon come to an end. And for centuries before Omar Khayyam wrote his immortal verse, science had searched—and in the centuries that have passed since then has continued to search, without halt, for the fabled "fountain of youth"—the means for renewing energy and extending the summer time of life.

Now, after many years of research, joyful reports from thousands show that lives clouded by the haze of too early autumn have been illumined by the summer sun of health and joy; old age, in a sense being kept at bay, and the physical and mental vigor of former years again enjoyed in work and recreation. And the discovery which so adds to the joy of living is easily available to every one who feels the need of greater energy and vitality.

The discovery had its origin in famous European laboratories. Brought to America, it was developed into a product that has won the highest praise in thousands of cases, many of which had defied all other treatments. In scientific circles the discovery has been known and used for several years with extraordinary gratifying appreciation for the success it has demonstrated. It is now put up in convenient tablet form, under the name of Korex compound, for distribution to the general public.

Anyone who finds life losing its charm and color or the feebleness of old age coming on years too soon, can obtain full strength treatment of this compound, sufficient for ordinary cases, under a positive guarantee that it costs nothing if it fails to prove satisfactory and only $2 if satisfied. In average cases, the compound usually brings about gratifying improvement in a few days.

Simply write in confidence to the Melton Laboratories, 2178 Melton Bldg., Kansas City, Mo., and this wonder restorative will be mailed to you, sealed in a plain wrapper. You may enclose $2 or, if you prefer, just send your name without money and pay the postman $2 and postage when the parcel is delivered. In either case, if you report within ten days that you are not satisfied, the purchase price will be refunded on request. The Melton Laboratories are nationally known and thoroughly reliable. Moreover, their offer is fully guaranteed so no one need hesitate to accept it. If you need this widely praised and remarkable rejuvenator, write for it today.

ASK MORE

ANNE THAN

SHE DAD

KNOWS ABOUT

SCENARIOS

"MOVING PICTURE STORIES" offers its readers a FREE course in PHOTOPLAY WRITING conducted by ANNE MAXWELL of the Scenario Department of First National Pictures Corporation. Every script submitted receives Miss Maxwell's personal criticism FREE of charge.

Other Features: The latest news from Hollywood by DOROTHY DONNELL, the home life of your favorites, the story of the leading photoplays taken directly from the screen, and a department of helpful advice and answers to questions conducted by PRINCESS WAHLETKA, the world-renowned psychic.

The little RED and REREAD magazine—the pioneer weekly of the screen. All newsstands. Price 10 cents.

MOVING PICTURE STORIES

166 West 23d Street New York City